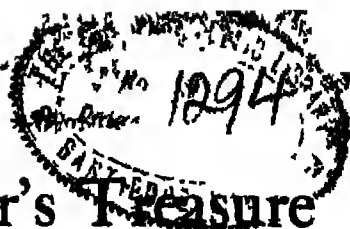


Now First Published



The Trainer's Treasure

836N-45
G-75

By

Nat Gould

Author of the Novels facing this page



London

John Long, Limited

Norris Street, Haymarket

[All Rights Reserved]

THE MAGIC OF SPORT

MAINLY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

By NAT GOULD

With Photogravure Portrait of Author and over 50 Illustrations
of Notable Sportsmen, Places and Horses

Demy 8vo., price 12s. 6d. net

A Special Colonial Edition, with all the Illustrations is also published

Standard.—"Mr Gould, one of the best-known writers of sporting novels, has succeeded in interesting and amusing many millions of readers. The present volume is likely to enjoy a similar popularity."

The World—"The book comprises a series of reminiscences from a well-stored memory, and, the sources of information being endless, diversified and authoritative, it tells a plain unvarnished tale which is at once illuminative and entertaining. 'The Magic of Sport' is an indispensable addition to every sportsman's bookshelves."

The Field.—"There is no better known novelist at the present day than Nat Gould. 'The Magic of Sport' is full of interest from start to finish, and at times one follows the course of the history almost greedily. The book should appeal not only to those who follow racing, but to the community at large."

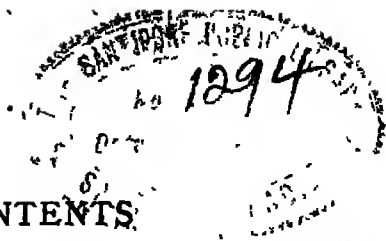
Observer.—"This book is an avalanche of anecdote. Mr. Gould tells his stories at the pace he used to ride, he spares his pen as little as he spared his horse. 'The Magic of Sport' will make a quick appeal to Mr Gould's far-reaching community of readers."

Birmingham Gazette—"No living writer, not even Miss Corelli, has a wider circle of readers than Nat Gould, the sporting novelist. 'The Magic of Sport,' mainly autobiographical though it is, is more interesting than many novels, and will be read with nearly as much avidity."

London

JOHN LONG, Ltd., 12, 13, 14, Norris St., Haymarket

83 GN (61)



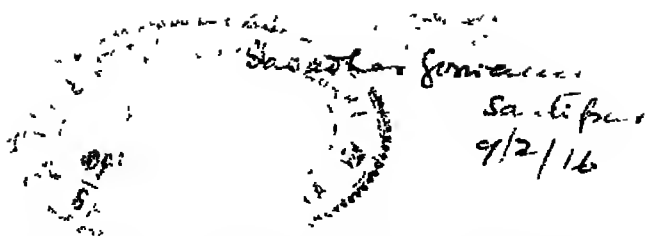
CONTENTS

CHAP	PAGE
I AT THE GATE	7
II THE TREASURE	16
III. BILLY	24
IV MAKING INQUIRIES	32
V. A WOMAN DISAPPEARS	41
VI THE POSIMAN	50
VII SIR LEIGH'S SISTER	59
VIII ROCKET	67
IX FROM POACHER TO GAMEKEEPER	75
X. DISCUSSING MR FLOYD	84
XI A QUARREL WITH THE TRAINR.	93
XII A CHILD OF THE COUNTRY	101
XIII A RIDE ON ROCKET	109
XIV THE MAN AT THE CORNER	117
XV. "FANCIED I WAS DEAD"	125
XVI ROCKET BOLTS	133
XVII "HE'S VERY NERVOUS"	141
XVIII ROCKET'S PERFORMANCE	150
XIX THE TENANT OF HEATHROW	158
XX THE MEET AT THE HALL	167
XXI. THE TREASURE SAVES THE PACK	174
XXII "I WONDER HOW I CAN MANAGE IT?"	181
XXIII THE ATTACK IN THE PLANTATION	189
XXIV THE TRAGEDY OF THE FARM	197
XXV ARRESTED	205
XXVI ROCKET WITH WILL UP	214
XXVII RALPH TELLS SIR LEIGH	222
XXVIII, A DRAMATIC INCIDENT	231
XXIX THE DEATH RIDE	239
XXX THE TREASURE WON	247

2624
83 G. N. 53

MR ANDREW LANG
ON NAT GOULD

AMONG all lovers of Sport the name of Nat Gould has become a household word. As sportsman, journalist and globe-trotter few men have gone through more varied experiences, and still fewer have used their experience to such excellent purpose. Since Whyte Melville and the immortal "Jorrocks," no writer has depicted with so spirited a pen the romance of the race-course, the surprises of the cricket-pitch, or the hair-breadth escapes of the hunting-field. Writing in *Longman's Magazine*, Mr Andrew Lang said, "A Sixpenny Academy would be a lively Academy. For President, I would, if consulted, select Mr Nat Gould, who shines by a candid simplicity of style, and a direct and unaffected appeal to the primitive emotions, and our love for that noble animal, the horse."



The Trainer's Treasure

CHAPTER I

AT THE GATE

"MAY I open it for you?"

"Do, please; Twig is in a bad temper, goodness knows why."

He dismounted and opened the gate. Twig fumed and fretted, but the girl sat her well.

"Thank you so much," she said with a bright smile, as she rode the mare through. She looked curiously at him; with her usual quick decision she made up her mind she could like him. Who was he?

The gate led from the main road on to Garth Hill, at the foot of which flowed the River Garth. There was a ford and a wooden bridge for foot-passengers, and the ascent was steep.

"Your mare takes the water?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, she doesn't mind water a bit; she is a famous jumper. We have forded the Garth many a time when the flood has been high. She's been restless all the morning; it is the first time I have had any trouble about opening a gate."

He was inwardly congratulating himself that

The Trainer's Treasure

her mare was restless; it had given him an opportunity of meeting an exceedingly pretty girl.

"I am a stranger in these parts," he said, smiling.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To Meadow Water, I believe there is such a place somewhere in this country."

"Yes, I believe there is."

"Fred Shirley lives there, does he not?"

"Yes; do you know him?"

"No, but he trained for my father years ago. I have been abroad in Australia for a long time."

"May I ask your name?"

He smiled as he said, "In exchange for yours. Mine is Quintin Floyd."

"And mine, Nellie Shirley."

"Are you Fred Shirley's daughter?" he asked, surprised.

She nodded, and her eyes sparkled merrily.

"I had no idea he had a daughter so——" He hesitated.

"So what?"

"So young," he added.

She laughed. "I am the only child. I never knew my mother; she died when I was an infant."

"Your father must be very fond of you," he said.

"A good guess; he is," she answered.

"Why not show me the way to Meadow Water?" he asked.

At the Gate

"I will; that is, when I have delivered my message."

"Where are you going?"

"To that white house at the top of Garth Hill," and she pointed with her whip to a picturesque farm homestead perched high up, and almost surrounded by trees.

"May I accompany you?" he asked.

"I don't see why you should not; would it be the correct thing?" she asked with a laugh.

"The correct thing may not always be the best, or the pleasantest," he said.

"That's jolly, I'm glad you are not one of the high and mighty stand-off sort."

He laughed as he said, "My experiences abroad knocked all that out of me."

"Come along, then; we've to ford the river and mount the hill," and she took her mare down to the water. He followed her.

Twig splashed into the stream, evidently liking her bath, but Floyd's horse seemed loath to follow.

"You opened the gate; it's my turn now. I'm giving you a lead," she called.

"Which I will follow," he said, as he pressed his horse forward.

They went along the winding road leading up the steep hill.

"Not a good hunting country, is it?" he asked.

"You are mistaken; it is. We have a famous

The Trainer's Treasure

pack of harriers near here, and the sport is generally good," she said.

"Rather dangerous galloping?"

"Sometimes, but that makes the sport more interesting."

"Who lives here?" he asked, as they rode into the yard.

"William Bligh; the family have been at White House Farm for years. Hallo, Billy!" she called out, then added to her companion, "We all call him Billy."

William Bligh turned round when he heard her call. There was an eager look on his face; it vanished when he saw she was not alone. He wore farm clothes, gaiters, a rough coat, and a cap that had seen better days. He was tall, well-built, strong, athletic; a good all-round man at most sports. As a boxer he had more than a local reputation.

"Billy, come here!" commanded the girl, and he walked slowly across the yard.

Floyd smiled as he thought, "She rules all the men in these parts, I'll wager."

"My friend, Mr Quintin Floyd; Dad trained for his father some years ago," she said.

"Glad to meet you," said Floyd, not at all ill-pleased she had called him her friend.

Will nodded, but did not shake hands; he had been hard at work all morning on the farm.

"Where's Cissy?" asked the girl.

"Gone to market."

At the Gate

"Well, I want her to come over to-morrow. Will you tell her?"

"Yes."

"You can come too if you like."

"We can't very well get away together," he said.

"Billy, you work too hard."

"A farmer has to work hard these times to make much out of it," he said.

"Don't you believe him, Mr Floyd; he's making money fast. I believe he's going to look round for a wife," she said.

Quintin Floyd saw the gleam in Will Bligh's eyes, and thought, "He'd not look much farther than you if he had a chance."

"I'll tell Cis," he said; "she'll be glad to come. She always is; it's very good of you to ask her."

"No it isn't; it's very good of her to come. She's such jolly company."

"She's bright; I don't know what I'd do without her," he said, then looking at Floyd's horse, said, "That's a good sort you are riding."

"He is; I gave a stiff price for him, but he's worth it."

"Don't want to sell him, I suppose?"

"No," said Floyd, somewhat annoyed at the question.

"Billy's always on the look out for bargains," said Nellie. "Will you buy Twig?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"Not me; she's a bit too skittish. You'll come a cropper on her some day," he said.

"Twig's got a bad name, but she really doesn't deserve it," she said.

"Those Sparrow mares are all alike."

"Twig is one of the best. Dad likes his stock."

"They can all go and stay, but you never know when you've got 'em," said Will.

"Well I can't stay any longer. Good-bye, Billy, and come to-morrow."

"I will if I can," he said slowly.

They rode out of the yard; she turned and waved her hand to him.

Will Bligh looked after them until they disappeared, then went across the yard again.

"Floyd's his name," he thought. "Never heard Fred Shirley mention it. Not a bad-looking fellow. She called him her friend; wonder how long she's known him? What a girl she is, the best in the county; the jolliest, prettiest madcap I'm ever likely to meet. Well, it's no use thinking about her in that way; she's bound to make a good match—a chap like me has no chance. It's a plodding game this, all very well in its way; a nice healthy life, but I'd like to have a chance of making money a bit quicker. When I mention about owning a jumper or two, Fred Shirley always puts me off. He says sticking to farming will pay me better than racing, and he ought to know."

At the Gate

He looked down the hill and saw them riding together.

"What chance has a man like me against such a man as Floyd?" he said with a sigh.

Fred Shirley saw his daughter riding with a gentleman, and wondered who it was. He opened the gate and they rode into the yard.

"This is Mr Floyd, Father," and she explained how she met him.

"Son of Mr Quintin Floyd, are you?" said Fred. "I'm very glad to see you."

They went inside; Nellie left them together.

"My father, as you are aware, died two years ago," said Floyd. "I was in Melbourne at the time; it came as a great blow to me, for I never heard he was ill."

"He died suddenly," said Fred. "I was very much upset. He had been a good patron; I trained many winners for him."

"He left everything to me," said Quintin. "I don't intend keeping on the racing establishment unless——"

"Unless what?" asked Fred.

"I can induce you to take over the management."

"Is that what you have come here for?" asked Fred.

"Yes."

"I have settled down at Meadow Water," said Fred, "and I shall not give it up. I have had a busy life; I am well over sixty, and have earned a rest."

The Trainer's Treasure

"You have, but I thought perhaps you might be induced to make an exception in my favour."

"I will give you any advice you care to ask me for, but I cannot undertake to go in for training again."

"I am sorry; it seems a pity to sell the horses. They are a very fair lot; at least Brandon says so. He has had them since you gave up."

"He was my head lad. Max Brandon is a clever man with horses. I recommended your father to give him my post."

"Somehow I don't care for him," said Floyd.

"He's a man wants knowing. When you thoroughly understand him you'll like him."

"Did you always trust him?" asked Floyd.

"Yes," said Fred, after a moment's hesitation.

"It seems to me he's surrounded by a bad set," said Floyd. "How long is it since you were at Newmarket and saw him?"

"Four or five years," said Fred.

"I wish you would come over with me one day and take stock of things," said Floyd.

"I'll do so with pleasure. I should like to see Newmarket again, but remember I will not resume training under any circumstances," said Fred.

"I will not ask you, but your advice will be invaluable to me, and I want you to have a talk with Brandon."

"I will, and I hope to be able to disabuse your mind of any prejudice you may have against him," said Fred.

At the Gate

Nellie came into the room. "I've seen Billy," she said. "Cissy was at the market, but he'll tell her to come here to-morrow, and he said he'd come if he could."

"Will Bligh has not much spare time," said her father. "He's doing well; a steady young fellow. Comes of a good, honest stock; I like him, he's sound."

"He looks it, Dad," said Nellie, laughing.

CHAPTER II

THE TREASURE

A GLORIOUS morning in May; the valley of the Garth smiling in the sunshine, the reflected rays dancing and glittering on the rippling water; birds singing blithely, sweet harmony to Nature's accompaniment, the anthem swelling high to the heavens, praising the bounteous source that gave it life; the trees in delicate, budding green, the hill-sides verdant, cattle grazing, the sweet scent of earth in the air.

Meadow Water stood at the head of the valley, its ivy-clad walls smothering the old stonework, stretching out tenaciously round the small, diamond-paned windows, climbing up to the roof, encircling the chimney stacks. The garden, resplendent in May blossoms; the tennis lawn ready for the season; the white spar paths glinting in the increasing light.

Peace reigned; no sound of hooting motor-horns broke the stillness, no dust or dirt to change the hedges from green to grey; everything fresh, good to look upon, a home in the valley of content.

Quintin Floyd remained for the night, and was

The Treasure

up early in the morning; at least he thought it early as he went out into the sunshine. The beautiful scene burst full upon him in all its glory as he stood on the path and looked down the valley. The river, the hills, the trees and hedges, the cattle, horses, and sheep, all refreshed his eyes. Mentally he contrasted it with the dull, brown, burnt-up land he had often gazed upon abroad. No wonder Fred Shirley had no desire to leave his retreat and go into harness again at horsy Newmarket.

A window opened above him. He did not hear it, so absorbed was he in contemplation. Nellie Shirley, looking out, saw him and smiled. She had been for an early-morning ride, and had changed her costume; sometimes she rode astride.

"Beautiful, is it not?" she called out, and he turned quickly at the sound of her voice.

"Good morning; I have beaten you this time. I am first down," he said.

"You are very wide of the mark. I have already been for a ride; this is the second edition," she said, as she touched her dress.

"Been for a ride so early?" he exclaimed.

"The morning is the best part of the day. Billy was on the hill, he doesn't let the grass grow under his feet."

"Billy has the advantage of me; he saw the glorious vision. I envy Billy."

"You have no occasion to; he works very hard."

The Trainer's Treasure

"Which is as much as to say I do not?"

"Precisely."

"But I have worked hard in my time."

"In the Colonies?"

"Yes."

"But you are too young to leave off; when a man ceases work he rusts."

"Wise young lady. Come down and join me."

"I shall probably lecture you if I do," she said, smiling.

"I will be an attentive listener."

"Coming," she said, and disappeared from the window.

She came out without her hat, her brown hair, with a golden tinge, coiled on her head, her cheeks rosy with health, her eyes clear and sparkling, a very charming picture; her whole body refreshed and glowing after a quiet night's sleep and a morning ride; a daughter of the country-side, one of the prettiest flowers in this enchanted valley. He looked at her admiringly; his glance lingered upon her with longing. It would have been good to have the right to take this treasure in his arms and kiss her. She noticed his abstraction and said, laughingly:

"Shall I do? You are taking stock of me?"

"I was admiring this lovely valley; I am looking at the most enchanting thing in it," he said.

"Don't talk nonsense; I am not enchanting. I

The Treasure

am a country girl, and I don't want any compliments."

"Not if they are true and well deserved?"

"No, talk sense, leave me out of it."

"I should be insensible to your attractions if I left you out of my conversation."

"Do you wish me to leave you?"

"No."

"Then leave my attractions, if any, alone, please."

"Where beauty commands, I must obey."

"Do you talk to all your lady acquaintances in this strain?"

"Oh dear no," he answered, laughing.

"Then why bore me? Do you like the view?"

"I never saw a more charming bit of scenery," he said.

"Bit! Isn't it big enough for you?" she asked.

"Indeed it is, but I have been so accustomed to vast spaces, and mighty rocks and ravines."

"I suppose you have hardly room to breathe in England?"

"I felt a bit cramped at first. I am getting over it."

Fred Shirley joined them. Quintin expressed his delight at the surroundings of Meadow Water.

"Yes, it is a nice old place," said Fred. "I bought it some years ago; I always intended settling down here. Have you had breakfast?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"No, he hasn't," said Nellie. "I'll see about it; he must be famished, he was up so early," and she ran in laughing.

"She's all I have," said Fred; "you cannot understand what she is to me, a perfect treasure."

"The trainer's treasure," said Quintin, smiling.

"Yes, indeed. She's the merriest madcap in the county."

"This, or any other, I should say," said Quintin.

"She was left to me when she was three weeks old."

"Your wife died soon after she was born?"

"Yes. Nellie is eighteen; she has seen a good deal. She went to school at Cheltenham, then finished at Brussels."

"Quite accomplished."

"I'll not say that; she knows sufficient. Over-education is a bad thing."

"I agree with you. The modern woman, who airs her knowledge on every occasion, is an awful bore."

"Thank goodness we are never troubled with them here," said Fred, laughing.

"Come inside, Mr Floyd," said Nellie. He followed her and enjoyed the homely meal spread for him.

"I saw Billy this morning on Garth Hill," said Nellie, as she rejoined her father. "He's bought that horse."

"Rocket?"

The Treasure

" Yes."

" Wonder what he gave for him? " said Fred.

" Guess."

" Did he tell you?" asked her father, surprised.

" Of course; I can get anything out of Billy."

" I believe you get your own way with most people."

" Perhaps I do; I go the right way about it."

" Billy's a real good sort," said Fred.

" He's a dear, delightful, untidy old bear," said Nellie.

" Not quite so shaggy."

" Oh, but he is; especially in the early morning. I told him he looked as though he hadn't given his hair a brush, or his face and hands a wash, for a week."

" That was very rude. What did he say? "

" Sulked, said it was only rich men like Mr Floyd who could afford to waste time in decorating their persons," said Nellie.

Her father laughed as he said:

" Billy has a warm, honest heart under a rough exterior. He's to be trusted; any woman might trust him. He's the soul of honour."

" And isn't Mr Floyd to be trusted? " asked Nellie.

" I don't know Mr Floyd; I do know Billy. What price did he pay for Rocket? "

" I asked you to guess."

" Two hundred? " said Fred.

" Wrong; have another try."

The Trainer's Treasure

"More?"

"Guess."

"He's not dear at two hundred."

"Then he bought him cheap. I told him so; Billy's a good hand at a bargain. He gave a hundred and twenty-five for him."

"Dirt cheap! Perhaps there's a screw loose somewhere."

"You'd not catch him buying a screw," said Nellie.

"What's he going to do with him?"

"Train him."

"Himself?"

"Yes."

Fred Shirley laughed; like most clever men in his profession he had very little faith in amateur trainers, or riders, although he was ready to acknowledge Will Bligh was a good horseman.

"He'll not make money at that game," he said.

"Why not? He's clever with horses, and he says Rocket is just the sort to win a steeplechase," said Nellie.

"There's no harm in trying, and if he wants a hint or two from me I'll give it him."

"You always try and help others, Dad," she said.

Cissy Bligh came over in the afternoon; she had heard of Quintin Floyd from her brother. She was quite a different type to Nellie. She was dark, with flashing brown eyes, and almost raven hair. Her skin had a peculiar brown tinge

The Treasure

that was not at all unbecoming. She was built on stronger lines than Nellie, had more of her brother's robust figure. She was nearly ten years older than her friend; a fine, handsome woman Quintin Floyd thought her.

She was devoted to Nellie. They were inseparable, and more like sisters. Cissy had watched over her with a motherly care ever since Fred Shirley came to Meadow Water. She was a great help to her brother; sturdy and self-reliant, as all the Blighs had been. Yet there was womanly weakness where her affections were concerned, although no man had touched her heart.

There was something about Cissy Bligh that strongly appealed to Quintin Floyd. He admired dark women, and thought she would be worth subduing. He recognised it would be no easy matter for any man to love her lightly.

Quintin Floyd left towards evening, Fred Shirley having promised to meet him at Newmarket and talk over matters with Max Brandon.

"We shall see you here again before long, I hope," said Fred. "We can always find room for you."

"I shall be delighted to come," he answered, with a look at Cissy that roused feelings in her that had so far been dormant.

Nellie laughingly said to her as Floyd rode away, "I believe you have made a conquest, Cissy; he had eyes for no one but you."

CHAPTER III

BILLY

THE Blighs had been at White House Farm for several generations. They were a good old yeoman stock, rooted firmly in the land, sturdy and self-reliant.

William Bligh and his sister Cissy were the last of their name in England. They had an uncle in Australia who had done well; made a fortune in the western district of New South Wales—a bachelor, and, judging by his rare letters, likely to remain so. He was their father's brother; went to the Colonies when twenty years of age, and had been there forty years. For the past ten years he had intended taking a trip to the Old Country, but so far had not carried out his intention.

Billy, as most people called him, was not exactly a favourite in the district. He was a quiet, reserved man. When he went to Bourne market he kept to himself; he was not one of the crowd at the "Dog and Partridge," making merry after business was over. He had few friends, but people who knew him trusted and believed in him. A real hard worker, he was a good farmer, seldom

Billy

grumbled, and took things as they came—bad seasons and otherwise alike. His men liked him, although he was a stern master. He worked with them, never shirked, and they knew he was more than their equal at anything he took in hand. On the whole he had prospered at White House, and saved money. He put by a couple of hundred a year, sometimes more, and had a nice nest-egg in the bank, also several safe investments that did not yield much interest. His landlord, Sir William Herbert, was seldom at Bourne Hall; he had gone the pace in his youth, and no one would have been surprised to hear of his death. The next heir was Leigh Herbert, a young man of three-and-twenty, who frequently came to the Hall during the shooting season. His sister, Betty Herbert, ten years his senior, sometimes accompanied him, but she preferred town to country, and had the reputation of being a woman of reckless disposition—a “Sir William” on the female side.

Will Bligh and young Leigh Herbert were often together. The young heir liked him; often invited him to the Hall when his sister was absent.

“I can’t bear country bumpkins,” she said, when her brother mentioned Will. “Do as you please when I am away, but spare me the infliction of his company when I am here.”

Cissy Bligh was much attached to her brother. He always treated her as an equal in knowledge, asking her opinion on money questions. Sir William Herbert was neither a bad landlord nor a

The Trainer's Treasure

good. He did not raise rents, but he seldom made improvements, and it was difficult to get any repairs done.

White House was sadly in need of an overhaul. The roof leaked, several of the floors were shaky, the stonework required attention. Had it not been for Cissy's care things would have been far worse.

Time after time Will asked for certain things to be done, and received no answer. He tried young Leigh, who laughed and said:

"I'd do all you ask in a minute had I the power, but as for speaking to my uncle—well, it's useless."

"I wish you had the power," thought Will.

So bad had White House become that Will Bligh had serious thoughts of leaving the old place; probably he would have given notice had it not been for Cissy, who was even more attached to it than her brother.

He had just had a serious talk with her the previous night about it, when, as he read the paper next morning, he saw a paragraph announcing that Sir William Herbert was ill at his London residence, and his condition was serious.

"He'll not get over it this time," he said; "there's one thing, he'll not be missed."

"It will be a change for the better when Leigh Herbert comes to the Hall," said Cissy.

Billy proved right in his judgment; Sir William did not recover. He died, and the funeral took

Billy

place at Bourne about a week after Quintin Floyd paid his visit to Meadow Water.

The villagers at Bourne did not show much sorrow for Sir William's death. They had seen very little of him. When he came to the Hall he seldom had a nod or a smile for anyone. As a young man he caused a shadow to fall on more than one household; and two or three village belles had cause to regret his attentions.

There was one man in Bourne who regretted Sir William's death. This was Ralph Bidgood, an idle, disreputable young man of five-and-twenty, who lived on allowances wrung from Sir William by threats.

Ralph Bidgood was generally supposed in Bourne village to be a son of Sir William Herbert's. He somewhat resembled him, although naturally coarser and rougher featured. He came to Bourne when he was eighteen, and settled down to a life of idleness, living at a cottage with Mrs Tapper, the widow of one of the foremen at the Hall.

Liza Tapper had been a beauty before she left Bourne for several years, returning as the wife of Jabez Tapper. Rumour connected Ralph Bidgood with her; there were whispers that she knew more about his birth than anyone, and it was well known she had a pension of a pound a week from Sir William.

Naturally the death of the baronet caused some perturbation in Liza Tapper's cottage.

The Trainer's Treasure

The new baronet, Sir Leigh, met Will a few days after the funeral.

"You can do something for the White House now, Sir Leigh?" he said.

"Certainly; I will. Tell me all you think necessary, and it shall be seen to," he said.

"Are you keeping on Mr Cresfield?" asked Will.

"Yes; why do you ask?"

Rufus Cresfield had been Sir William's agent for some years.

"Because I think he's responsible for most of the discontent about here," said Will bluntly.

"He's a very good man; I don't care to make a change," said Leigh. "Have you any grievance against him?"

"He's an interfering man; he'll never let well alone. We are not good friends," said Will.

"In what way has he interfered?" asked Leigh.

"Complains about my shooting on the farm; says the place has not been well done by; finds fault with most things," said Will.

Sir Leigh laughed as he said, "I'll see you are not interfered with; you can shoot anything you like on the farm. I give you permission; there is plenty for all. This is a good game country."

"He'll not like that," said Will.

The young baronet's face clouded as he said, "Cresfield will have to do as I wish, not as he likes."

Billy

" And you'll put the repairs in hand as soon as I send in what is required? " said Will.

" Certainly, the house ought to have been done up long ago; tell Miss Bligh I'll see to it at once, inside and out."

Billy thanked him, and rode towards home. As he went down the avenue leading from Bourne village to his farm he met Rufus Cresfield. He could not resist the temptation of pulling up and telling him what Sir Leigh had said.

" So you've been at him already? " said Cresfield in surly tones.

" He has promised to have all repairs done, inside and outside the house, and also to the farm buildings."

" I shall have a word or two to say about that."

" No doubt," said Will. " There's something else."

" What is it? "

" He has given me permission to shoot anything on the farm."

" Game? "

" Yes."

" I'll have something to say about that too," said Cresfield.

" You had better not say too much or I'll tell him why you are so bitter against me," said Billy.

" And what will you tell him? " asked Cresfield.

" You know well enough."

" Perhaps I do and perhaps I don't. Anyway, I'd advise you not to interfere in my affairs."

The Trainer's Treasure

"And it will be all the better for you if you leave mine alone," said Billy, riding on.

Rufus Cresfield looked after him with a scowl on his face.

"So he's been putting in his spoke already, has he?" he muttered. "Threatens me with what he'll tell—let him—threatened men live long."

Rufus Cresfield had made an attempt to win Cissy Bligh for his wife. He proposed to her and was rejected in such a manner that he knew there was no chance for him. He met her some weeks after in a lonely lane, and renewed his proposal. At the time he was somewhat the worse for liquor, and had attempted to kiss her. Cissy resented the outrage, and Cresfield found he had met his match; she gave him a blow between the eyes that caused him to keep in the house for several days. When Billy heard of it he was in a towering rage, and would have ridden off there and then to give him the thrashing he deserved, had not Cissy persuaded him to let the matter drop.

"Next time I meet him I shall not be able to keep my hands off him," said Billy.

"You must. Treat him with contempt. I've given him a blow that will last him some time; I don't think he'll molest me again," she said.

Billy knew Rufus Cresfield had almost the entire management of the Bourne estates, and that he could make things very unpleasant, but this would not have prevented him giving the man a

Billy

thrashing had his sister not turned him from his purpose.

When Sir William died he knew Rufus Cresfield's power would be much diminished. He would not have the same influence with Sir Leigh.

"If he knew Cresfield had insulted my sister he'd make short work of him," thought Billy. "If he interferes with me I'll tell Sir Leigh, and see what he has to say about it."

Rufus Cresfield, as he walked towards Bourne, had bitter feelings in his heart against Billy and his sister.

CHAPTER IV

MAKING INQUIRIES

SIR LEIGH HERBERT had always been popular in Bourne village, although he seldom visited the cottages, and knew very little of the older folk. As a lad he played cricket with the members of the village club, and supported them liberally out of his pocket money.

Mrs Tapper had spoken to him once or twice, but she avoided him during Sir William's lifetime. Liza Tapper kept to herself, saying but little to her neighbours, chiefly occupying her spare time in gardening, looking after her chickens and the cow she had in a small paddock at the back; also a couple of pigs claimed frequent attention. This paddock, small though it was, caused a lot of jealousy; it was the only bit of pasture-land attached to a cottage in the village, and there were others who thought they had more right to it than Widow Tapper.

The villagers were scandalised, or pretended to be, by the presence of Ralph Bidgood in her cottage; a young man of five-and-twenty had no business living with Liza Tapper.

Making Inquiries

Gradually, however, it was tacitly agreed that Ralph Bidgood was her son, or some very near relation, and that Sir William knew more about Ralph's parentage than he ought to have done.

Mrs Tapper seldom troubled to deny anything; she thought it best to let them puzzle it out in their own way. She did not appear to have much affection for Ralph; she seldom spoke to him, and he spent most of his time loafing at the village public-house, and was often absent at night in pursuit of game.

Not a bad-looking fellow, Ralph Bidgood, but his mode of living gave him a dissipated, neglected air. He was careless in his dress and speech; not at all particular what he did or said in his cups.

It was after Sir William's death that he spoke to Liza Tapper one night in a serious strain. She listened to what he had to say; when he ceased speaking she made no immediate reply.

"Haven't you anything to say about it?" he asked.

"There's time enough; wait a bit. We'll see what happens," she said.

"Supposing he doesn't keep up the payments?" said Ralph.

"He'll not do it if there's no mention made of it," she said.

"But he'll have to; we can't starve," he said angrily.

The Trainer's Treasure

" Sir Leigh may not know I have always received a pension from his uncle," she said.

" Then he'll have to be told."

" That remains to be seen," she said quietly.

" Do you mean to say you'd hesitate about telling him? " he asked in astonishment.

" Not quite, but if I told him he'd wish to know why I received the pension? "

" If that's all, you'd tell him, of course."

" I don't know; I'm none so sure of it."

" Eh! why not? Everybody knows it? " he said.

" They may think they know; that's quite a different thing," said Liza slowly.

" Well, I know, and he's got to know if necessary."

" I think he will pay the pension if you behave yourself," she said.

" So I'm to sit in the garden and twirl my thumb? "

" There is plenty for you to do if you'll only do it; I've told you that before."

" Milk the cow, clean the pigs out, dig the garden, feed chickens," he said angrily; " that's not in my line."

" I wish it were; you would pay a little for your keep then," she said.

" I'm not going to pay for my keep when you can force him to pay," said Ralph.

" I shall not try to force Sir Leigh."

" You did Sir William."

Making Inquiries

"Once or twice, to get you out of trouble."

He looked at her keenly, then said, "Sometimes I wonder if you really are my mother."

"I have never said I was," she answered.

"Are you?" he asked.

"Better not stir in that direction," she said.

"But you can surely tell me whether you are my mother or not?"

"I shall say nothing."

"Anyhow, I'm Sir William's son, I'll bet on that; it's in my face for anyone to see, and if you're not my mother, who is?"

"I've always told you not to get such notions into your head; they're not good for you."

"They've been there so long I'm not likely to get 'em out," he answered.

He looked out of the small window, and saw Sir Leigh crossing the broad white road. He had evidently just left the Hall.

"He's coming this way," said Ralph.

"Who?"

"Sir Leigh."

"He'll not be coming here; why should he?" she said.

"I tell you he is; he's making straight for the gate. I'm off; it'll do no good me being here."

He took his cap, slipped out at the back door, walked across the small paddock, climbed the fence, and dropped into the lane.

"Wonder what he's after," he muttered.

Sir Leigh came into the garden, walked up the

The Trainer's Treasure

gravel pathway, with a box hedge on either side, and tapped on the door.

Mrs Tapper opened it, and dropped a curtsy. She was always neat and clean, and although her face showed signs of trouble and wear, she had still remnants of good-looks left.

"Good day to you, Sir Leigh," she said. "Will you step inside?"

She was already in the room, wiping a chair with her apron.

"Are you alone?" he asked.

"Yes."

He came inside and sat down.

"During Sir William's lifetime you received a pension of one pound a week?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any objections to telling me why you received it?" he asked.

"I would rather not," she said.

He smiled as he said, "I am not asking you out of idle curiosity; I think it will be better for you to tell me."

Her heart beat painfully. Was he going to stop her pension? If so, where was she to go, what was she to do?

"I cannot tell you," she said in a low voice.

He looked at her bowed head; he had no wish to appear unkind or inquisitive.

"You mean you will not?" he said.

She raised her head, looking at him with bright eyes.

Making Inquiries

"I will not, Sir Leigh."

He changed his tactics.

"You know what the opinion of the villagers is about Ralph Bidgood?" he said.

She made no answer.

"I have heard it said many times that he is Sir William's son."

Still no answer.

"It would relieve me very much to know the truth," he said.

"Why do you ask me?" she said.

He looked surprised. He had, of course, heard of the supposed relationship between her and Bidgood.

"Because you are the most likely person to know; he has lived in this cottage with you for several years."

"I do not know if he is Sir William's son," she said.

Again he was surprised.

"Do you know if he is not?" he asked.

"No."

"But you must know one way or the other?"

"Why, for what reason?"

It was evident she intended keeping her counsel. He tried another move.

"Ralph Bidgood is an undesirable man to have in the village," he said. "He is not a good companion for the younger men."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I hardly know; I think it would be far better for everyone if he left Bourne."

"It will be difficult to send him away," she said.

"If you refuse to have him here he will go."

"I do not refuse to have him," she said.

"Do you not think you are rather unreasonable?" he asked.

"I have no wish to be so," she replied.

She recognised that he was patient with her, and it roused a feeling of gratitude.

"Why not oblige me by answering my first question?"

"Please do not ask me, Sir Leigh; please do not," she said.

"I promise you I will keep your secret," he said.

"Sir Leigh," she said in a low voice, looking round fearfully, "let things rest as they are; do not alter anything. Do not try and sift this matter; it is better not."

Her manner was strange; she was genuinely distressed. He had no difficulty in seeing this. Was it on her account, or his? It could not be on his.

"I do not wish to trouble you to recall any unpleasant recollections," he said kindly, "but I do not like this rumour that Bidgood is Sir William's son to be constantly going about; it annoys me."

"I am sorry," she said.

"He must go away," said Sir Leigh.

Making Inquiries

"You wish me to turn him out?" she asked.

"To give him notice to leave his room," he said.

"And if he will not go?" she asked.

"He must if you insist."

"There may be reasons why I shall not insist."

"If I ask you to send him away?" he said.

"I will do my best to persuade him to go, but I shall fail."

"I see," said Leigh; "you keep him, he pays you nothing."

She did not answer.

"Do you think that is right?" he asked.

"No."

"Is it a fact?"

"Yes."

"Then for your sake he must either go or work. I think I understand; you can keep silent if you wish. Your pension will be continued on one condition—that Ralph Bidgood works if he remains, and pays you for his board. You understand that? I will have no idlers in the village; it sets a very bad example," said Leigh.

"Where will he find work here?" she asked.

"I will ask Cresfield to give him work."

"He will not; he does not like him," she said.

"He will do as I wish," said Leigh.

"And if he refuses to work?" she said.

"Then he must go."

"And I must go with him?" she said.

"That is not necessary."

The Trainer's Treasure

"But it is," she said

"I have no wish for you to leave Bourne," he said.

"Nor have I."

"Then sorry; I can deal with Ralph Bidgood," said Leigh, as he went out.

"You think you understand," she muttered, and shook her head sadly.

CHAPTER V

A WOMAN DISAPPEARS

FRED SHIRLEY went to Newmarket with Quintin Floyd. Max Brandon was pleased to see his old master again; at the same time he wondered why he came with Floyd.

During the run down, Floyd had said it would be better for Fred to have a quiet chat alone with Max, when he could explain matters.

"If you will not go into harness again, and train my horses, you can come to some arrangement with Brandon about them. Will you manage my stud? That is often done, and I do not see what objections he can have."

"He'll not like it," said Fred.

"If I insist he will have to like it," said Floyd irritably. "You know I told you he mixed with a queer set. I don't care for his companions; it gives the stable a bad name."

Fred smiled; he did not quite understand the situation. Max Brandon must have changed since he first knew him; there had been no complaints about him from Quintin Floyd's father.

Max Brandon showed them round the stables.

The Trainer's Treasure

Fred's practised eyes saw the horses were in good condition, well-trained, everything was neat and tidy, the lads civil and obliging.

After luncheon Quintin Floyd left them. He had, he said, some business to attend to in the town.

Max scowled at him as he left the room. Fred noticed it, and thought, "There's something wrong here."

"How do you get on with him?" he asked, nodding in the direction of the door.

"Middling," said Max shortly.

"Good patron, isn't he?"

"There's nothing to complain of; he's ready with his cash."

"Then what's the trouble?" asked Fred.

The trainer started, looked at Fred curiously, and said, "There's no trouble that I know of; why have you come here with him?"

"He asked me."

"When?"

Fred explained.

"So he paid you a visit at Meadow Water?"

"Yes."

"And accidentally met Miss Shirley on the road?"

Fred nodded.

"I wonder why he took the trouble to hunt you out in the country?"

"Seems natural, as I trained for his father."

"Did he ask you anything about me?"

A Woman Disappears

"He spoke of you."

"Was he dissatisfied?"

"Not exactly, but he rather surprised me," said Fred.

"In what way?"

"Nothing to do with your training, but he didn't seem to like the company you keep. He said you were surrounded by a queer lot of fellows."

"Oh, he did!" exclaimed Max. "I don't mind telling you he's a queer fellow himself."

"In what way?" asked Fred.

"Tell me why you came here," asked Max.

"You know I have no wish to interfere," said Fred.

"Yes."

"He wanted me to train for him," said Fred.

Max laughed as he said, "You are welcome to do so if you wish, but I'd advise you not to try it."

"I have no intention of doing so."

"You told him that?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He thought I might do so, as I trained for his father."

"His father was a very different man," said Max. "Anything else?"

"He asked if I would manage his stud."

"Keep an eye on me?" said Max.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I told him I had every confidence in you, and that I recommended you to his father."

"You have always been a friend to me," said Max.

"Would you have any objection to my managing his stud? I think we should hit it all right," said Fred.

"None in the least; I'd rather like it."

"I should not leave Meadow Water; I have settled down there."

"It is a long way from Newmarket."

"It would not be necessary for me to be here often."

"No, I suppose not."

"Tell me, Max, why you don't like Floyd," said Fred.

"It's nothing to do with the horses; so far as they are concerned I think we hit it off pretty well."

"Then where's the trouble?"

"It's in quite a different direction; it concerns Daisy."

"Your sister?" exclaimed Fred.

"Yes; she's left me," said Max.

Fred Shirley was much surprised. He thought Daisy and her brother were on such good terms. She had kept house for him for five or six years; since she was twenty.

"Why has she gone?" asked Fred.

"Because I told her the truth."

"What about?"

A Woman Disappears

"Quintin Floyd."

"Well?"

"Daisy is a good-looking woman. She's improved a lot since you have seen her. When Floyd came here he began paying attention to her. He's a bad lot where women are concerned; I'm sure of it. I told her he was not in earnest, that he was flirting, passing the time with her, and that it was dangerous. To cut it short, I may as well say we quarrelled, and she packed up her things and left."

"Where did she go?"

"That's just it; I don't know where she is," said Max.

"Haven't you tried to find out?"

"Yes."

"What do you think?"

"Daisy is no fool. She's no silly-minded woman, whose head is easily turned by flattery, or I'd say Quintin Floyd knew where she is."

"You don't think she is with him?"

"No; I believe he has tried to find her."

"But why did she leave you if it was not on account of him? Do you not think he may be aware where she is?" said Fred.

"I haven't asked him, but I've had him watched, and he has not been seen with her."

"It is mysterious," said Fred. "Of course you will continue to make inquiries; she has money?"

"Yes; her mother left her two hundred a year,"

The Trainer's Treasure

said Max. "You must not mention this to Floyd."

"Our conversation?"

"Yes."

"I am not likely to."

"Fred," said Max seriously.

"What is it?"

"I want you to help me to find Daisy."

The two men looked at each other in silence, then Fred said:

"I will do anything you wish, Daisy was always a favourite of mine; but where is the search to begin?"

"That's just it; I don't know."

"Are you sure Floyd does not know where she is?" asked Fred.

"Until the last month I have thought so, I almost think so now."

"How long is it since she left you?"

"Six months."

"How long has he paid attention to her?"

"Ever since we became acquainted with him."

"You may be mistaken as to his character."

"I wish I were," said Max.

"Here he is," said Fred, looking out of the window. "What about managing his horses?"

"Say I have agreed to it," said Max hurriedly; "it will be easier for us to communicate about Daisy, and I don't suppose you will interfere."

"We shall have no differences, I am sure," said Fred.

A Woman Disappears

Quintin Floyd looked from one to the other as he entered the room.

"We've settled it," said Fred.

"I have no objection to Mr Shirley managing the horses," said Max.

"I'm glad of that; it saves trouble," said Floyd.

"I don't see any necessity for the appointment, all the same," said Max.

"Well, I do; that's where we differ," said Floyd. "Two heads are better than one."

"Not where training horses is concerned."

"I shall not interfere with the training," said Fred, smiling.

"But you will have a free hand in case you find it advisable," said Floyd.

"I know Max very well; he has been under me for years. He trains on my system, so there will be nothing to differ about."

They remained the night at Newmarket, and went to London next morning.

"If you think I can be of any use where your sister is concerned, do not hesitate to write to me," said Fred.

"Try and draw Floyd," said Max.

"Then you have changed your mind? You think he may know where she is?" said Fred.

"It's just possible; if he does, it will be because she wishes it," said Max.

Quintin Floyd read the paper. Fred Shirley glanced at him occasionally as he sat in the corner of the carriage.

The Trainer's Treasure

"He's got a curious face," thought the trainer. "No one would take him for Hector Floyd's son; there's no resemblance that I can see. Being abroad has changed him, no doubt; I've heard it said ten years in the Colonies works wonders in a man—for good or evil. I'd like to know which way it's affected him. Good-looking man; sort of fellow would attract women."

Quintin Floyd looked up from his paper.

"I wonder what has become of Brandon's sister?" he said quietly.

Fred Shirley started; the remark was so unexpected. Floyd smiled as he said, "Does my remark surprise you?"

"No."

"Then why did you start?"

"Did I?"

"Of course; you know you did," said Floyd sharply.

"I was not aware you were interested in her," said Fred lamely.

"No more I am, but you know she has left Newmarket; he probably told you."

"I believe he mentioned she had gone away."

"It doesn't seem to upset him much. Fine girl—woman, I mean. It's a pity she's cleared out. I rather admired her."

"Do you know where she is?" asked Fred, looking straight at him.

Quintin Floyd did not flinch. He answered in a

A Woman Disappears

surprised tone, " Me! What an absurd question! How on earth should I know her whereabouts? "

" He doesn't know," thought Fred, " or he'd not take it so coolly."

" It is a pity she's left him," said Fred.

" I suppose the class of men he brought to the house was more than she could stand," said Floyd.

" It is because he mixes with these fellows I want you to manage my horses; you can put a check on him in this direction."

" Then you think it is on account of the company he keeps that his sister left him? " said Fred.

" It is probable; do you know a better reason? " said Floyd.

" No," replied Fred.

" I'd like to know all Brandon told him about her," thought Quintin Floyd.

CHAPTER VI

THE POSTMAN

NELLIE SHIRLEY made a pretty picture, in an appropriate *frame*, as she stood, basket in hand, cutting roses in the garden at Meadow Water. She hummed a popular tune, and was in excellent spirits.

The bees were busy climbing in and out of the sweet scented flowers, and butterflies danced around her, hovering over the roses, touching them gently, then gliding away out of reach.

The postman called once a day, about eight in the morning. He had a long walk, and was always glad of a rest at Meadow Water. Amos Berry had carried letters for thirty-five years, and at sixty he was strong and active.

Nellie was one of his favourites. He loved all young things, and she was always kind to him. Her cheerful words gladdened his heart. She teased him, and he rather liked it; there was no ill-nature in her remarks.

Amos was peeping over the stone wall watching her. "She's the prettiest flower in the garden," he said. "Bless her young heart; it does me

The Postman

good to look at her. I hope I'll never carry bad news for you, Missey, or see your eyes grow wet as you read a letter of my bringing. God bless your bright face; it was never made for sorrow."

She caught sight of him, and ran down to the gate.

"Any letters for me, Amos?" she asked.

"Isn't it a lovely morning?"

"Aye, that it is," said Amos. "It's only right that such a pretty flower as yourself should be expanding in the sunshine."

"Am I expanding?" she asked, laughing.

"You're more robust-like than you were a few years back."

"I hope I am not growing too stout."

"There's a heap of difference between being stout and buxom," said Amos; "I call Mrs Dent stout."

Nellie laughed merrily. Martha Dent was the housekeeper.

"Better not let her hear you say that," she said.

"Why for not?" said Amos.

"She's very touchy on the subject."

"Them stout folks is always touchy," growled Amos.

"You have not told me if you have a letter for me?" said Nellie.

Amos slung his bag round and opened it, then dived his hand into the cavern and brought out sundry letters, tied in a bundle. His actions were deliberate; it was no use trying to hurry him.

The Trainer's Treasure

"There's one here, Missey," he said.

"From father," she said, as she saw the handwriting.

"He's away?" exclaimed Amos in surprise.

"Yes; gone to Newmarket with Mr Floyd."

"Floyd? I thought he was dead?"

"It is Hector Floyd's son from Australia; he has come into the property," said Nellie, reading her letter.

"Didn't know he had a son," said Amos.

"What a strange thing!" said Nellie.

"For him to have had a son?" asked Amos.

"I was referring to something in the letter," she said.

Her father had written about Daisy Brandon's disappearance. He said he would return to Meadow Water on the following day.

"I hope there's nothing wrong?" said Amos.

"No; nothing at all."

He looked at the letter, wishing he could read the contents. He generally sat under a hedge for a quarter of an hour during his walk and scanned the post cards—"public property" he called them.

"What's your father gone to Newmarket for?" asked Amos. "He's not going to start training again, I hope?"

"Mr Floyd asked him to do so, but he refused."

"That's right; he don't want to begin afresh at his time of life."

"He is going to manage Mr Floyd's stud."

"Will he leave here?"

The Postman

"Oh no, he loves Meadow Water, and so do I."

"I'm 'nation glad to hear it. I couldn't bear to lose ye now."

"Are you very fond of me, Amos?" asked Nellie, smiling.

"Lor' bless yer, Missey, yer just the very light o' my eyes. If yer left Meadow Water the sun would go out; he'd never have the face to shine any more," said Amos.

"Do you know you are a very nice old man," said Nellie.

"Nay, but I'm none so old but I can admire a pretty lassie when I see her," said Amos.

"I wonder you never married," said Nellie.

"It's not for want of opportunities, I can tell you," he said.

"Could you not have found one young lady to suit you?" she asked.

"There was so many of 'em, I got fair bewildered. You see I'm kind-hearted, Missey, and if I'd chosen one I'd have offended the rest, so I just let 'em all slide."

"It seems a pity, Amos; you'd have been far better with someone to look after you."

"Maybe I'd have been the one as had to do the looking after," he said; "I've seen some awful examples in my time."

Nellie laughed heartily as she said, "Come inside, Amos, and I'll give you a refresher; that's the proper word. You deserve it; it's hot."

"Talking's warm work."

The Trainer's Treasure

"So is walking," said Nellie.

"I'll just be off round to the back," said Amos.

"Going to have a chat with Martha," said Nellie, shaking her finger at him.

Amos chuckled as he said, "Martha's always on the lookout for a letter; I shouldn't wonder if she had a husband in foreign parts."

"You had better not tell her so," laughed Nellie.

Amos walked round to the kitchen door, where he scraped his boots, merely from force of habit, for the roads were dry and dusty.

Mrs Dent heard the familiar sound.

"Drat that Amos," she muttered; "he's here again. He might as well live here."

The scraping continued; there was no knock.

"Come in, can't you, without making that row," she said.

Amos tramped inside. It was a large kitchen, flagged, and scrupulously clean.

"Mornin', Mrs Dent; I hope I see you well," he said.

Martha stared at him. "You see me, and I am well," she said.

"I've been talking to Miss Nellie. She's had a letter from her father."

"How do you know? Did you read it? Sometimes, Amos, I fancy you steam the letters and extract the contents."

"Never was guilty of such an unbecoming act,"

The Postman

he said. "Post cards I can't help reading, but letters—never!"

"Well, I am very glad to hear it; but it is extraordinary how you know so much news," she said.

Nellie came into the kitchen and handed Amos a tankard of ale.

"Thank you kindly," he said; "may you find a good husband and live happy all your life."

"She can be happy without a husband," snapped Martha.

"No doubt," said Amos; "but it's only natural such a sweet, pretty face should attract admirers."

"Nonsense," said Martha.

Nellie laughed as she said, "Amos tells me all the girls were after him when he was young."

"Then he must have been a very different looking man," said Martha.

"I must be ganging," said Amos; "I've letters for White House. I hear Sir Leigh is going to make a lot of improvements there."

"Not before they were wanted," said Nellie.

"There's bad blood between Will Bligh and Rufus Cresfield," said Amos.

"I do not like Cresfield," said Nellie.

"There's precious few like him, or give him a good word," said Amos. "He was very thick with Sir William, but Sir Leigh's put him in his place."

"You're an old woman for gossip," said Martha.

The Trainer's Treasure

"You're a good listener," snapped Amos.
"There's more news I've heard," he went on.

Martha pretended to be busy over the fire.

"There's Liza Tapper; they do say as she'll have to clear out now. Sir Leigh can't abide that lazy fellow, Ralph Bidgood," said Amos.

"He'll never turn Mrs Tapper out?" said Martha.

"I'm none so sure about that. I'll be sorry for her; but Ralph Bidgood's a loafer. Cresfield's taken up with him a bit lately."

"With Bidgood?" asked Martha.

"Yes."

"That's funny."

"Very; don't know what's at the bottom of it. No good, I'll wager."

"You are better than the local paper for news," laughed Nellie.

"I must be going, or Mr Bligh's letters will be late. Fine man, Will Bligh; very nice man indeed," said Amos, looking at Nellie.

"If you stand loitering about much longer you'll get notice to quit the service," said Martha.

"And me having a pension due in a few months," said Amos; "that would be very hard."

"Tell Miss Bligh I wish to see her this afternoon," said Nellie.

"I'm not allowed to carry messages," said Amos; "but as it's you, Miss Nellie, I'll risk it."

"Very kind indeed of you," she said.

The Postman

Amos shuffled out, and Martha said, "Gossiping old humbug; I can't abide him."

"He's not a bad sort," said Nellie.

"He causes a lot of mischief with that tongue of his."

"His gossip is harmless," said Nellie.

"You heard from your father?" asked Martha.

"Yes; he will be home to-morrow. You remember Daisy Brandon?" said Nellie.

"Yes; a fine-looking woman."

"She has left her brother's, and he does not know where she is."

"Left home!" exclaimed Martha. "What for?"

"My father gives no reasons; he merely states the fact."

"Her brother will miss her," said Martha.

"Oh, I expect she will return before long," said Nellie, as she walked through the hall and out into the front garden.

Looking across towards Garth Hill, she saw a lady and gentleman on horseback, riding down the road. She stepped back into the hall, and took the glasses out of the case.

"It's Sir Leigh, I think, and Lady Betty. I hope they are not coming here; I don't like her. She's overbearing," said Nellie.

She had only met Sir Leigh two or three times, his sister about the same number, but she had found out that Betty Herbert had a sharp tongue.

The Trainer's Treasure

" They are coming here; what a bore! " she said, then called out :

" Martha, Martha! "

" What is it? "

" Sir Leigh and his sister are coming here. Can I say I am out; that my father is away? I mean, you can say it for me? "

" Better see them," said Martha, bustling along the hall. " She will be angry if you do not. "

" She will not know I am at home," said Nellie.

" She'll guess as much; Lady Betty is not easily deceived," said Martha.

CHAPTER VII

SIR LEIGH'S SISTER

BETTY HERBERT'S visits to Bourne Hall had hitherto been few and far between. She got on better with her brother than anyone, because he humoured her and put up with her domineering ways.

She rode out with him to see what contemplated improvements were intended at White House, and grumbled at the expense.

Will Bligh heard what she had to say, then remarked that he thought Sir Leigh was only doing the right thing by the property and the tenant.

"I am glad you place the property first," she snapped.

"You consider tenants secondary considerations?" said Will.

"I generally keep my opinions to myself," was the reply.

A fine, handsome woman, Lady Betty—a courtesy title; it became her well.

Will Bligh was a strong, good-looking man, she thought, and naturally kept this to herself. She

The Trainer's Treasure

had had encounters with Will before, and came off second best, much to her brother's amusement.

She also amused Will Bligh. He liked to cross her, wished he could lower her proud, independent spirit.

"Snappy as usual," he said to Cissy.

"Who?"

"Lady Betty."

"Has she been here?"

"Yes; with her brother. Called round to grumble at the cost of repairs."

"I did not see them ride into the yard."

"I'd like to take her down a peg," said Will.
"By Gad, Cis, she's handsome! What a pity she's such a devil of a temper!"

"That will improve when she is married."

"She is not one of the marrying sort. She told Samson one day she preferred a horse to a man," laughed Will.

"We shall see," said Cissy, wondering if she would prefer Rocket to Will.

"They've gone down the hill; expect they'll call at Meadow Water."

"Why should they?"

"Oh, I don't know why; but I'll bet they do."

"I'll go and see," said Cissy.

She opened the front door, and saw them riding down Garth Hill, then turn off towards Shirleys'.

"You are right," she called; "they are going there."

Sir Leigh's Sister

Will made no remark, but went into the yard again to continue his work.

Martha Dent ushered Sir Leigh and his sister into the drawing-room. The horses were held by one of the men.

Betty looked a fine figure of a woman in her close-fitting habit. She had not called at Meadow Water for a long time, nor had she seen much of Nellie since she was a schoolgirl in short frocks.

"What an awful bore," said Nellie, when Martha advised her to go and see them. "How do I look?"

"As pretty as a picture," was Martha's answer.

"I mean my dress?"

"It's quite right; just the thing for the morning."

"I wish they'd call at a reasonable hour," said Nellie, as she walked off to the encounter.

When Nellie entered the room Betty looked at her in surprise. Was this beautiful girl the little chit she had seen scudding down Garth Hill in short frocks, her hair flying wildly behind?

Sir Leigh shook her hand, then Betty.

"I am sorry my father is away," said Nellie; "he has gone to Newmarket with Mr Floyd."

"Who is he?" asked Sir Leigh.

"The son of Hector Floyd. My father trained for him for several years. Quintin Floyd, that is his name, was out in Australia for many years; he came home after his father's death."

The Trainer's Treasure

"I should not have known you had I met you on the road," said Betty. "You have improved."

"Do you think so?" said Nellie quietly.

"I generally say what I think," she answered.

"Snappy thing!" thought Nellie.

"I wished to see Mr Shirley," said Sir Leigh.

"I wonder if he would give me his valuable advice? I am anxious to have a few horses in training for the next 'chasing season'; I thought perhaps he would assist me in buying five or six."

"I am sure he would with pleasure," said Nellie. "He is going to manage Mr Floyd's racing stud."

Sir Leigh looked surprised as he said, "I thought he had done with racing?"

"So he has, at least training, but Mr Floyd was very anxious for him to look after things."

"Has Mr Floyd been here?" asked Betty.

"Yes."

"When?"

"A week or two back."

"Does he look like a Colonial?"

"He is dark; has lived in the open," said Nellie.

"Is he thinking of taking a place in this neighbourhood?"

"I do not know; he did not mention it."

"I suppose he is rich?"

"Very well off, I believe," said Nellie, amused.

"We want a few wealthy men in the Hunt. I wonder if he rides?"

"Oh yes, he rides well, and has a good horse."

Sir Leigh's Sister

"You have seen him on horseback?"

Nellie explained how they accidentally met.

"Quite romantic," said Betty sarcastically.

"Oh no; merely an ordinary tangle with a gate," said Nellie quietly.

"We must go, Leigh; I have to call at Swaines'," said Betty, and held out the tips of her fingers to Nellie, who just touched them.

"Will you ask your father to help me?" said Sir Leigh, smiling at her, thinking what a pretty girl she was.

"With pleasure; I am sure he will be only too pleased."

"Come and give me a hand," shouted Betty.

"My sister is in a hurry; she generally is," said Sir Leigh.

"I should have thought she had a good deal of time to spare," said Nellie.

"So she has. She is in a hurry to kill it," he said, laughing.

"Thank goodness that's over," said Nellie, as she watched them ride away.

"There's a demand for father," said Nellie.

"Sir Leigh wants him to help him to buy some jumpers."

"Hunters?" said Martha.

"No; steeplechasers."

"So he's bitten with the racing mania?" said Martha. "Will Bligh won't have much chance with Rocket against him."

The Trainer's Treasure

"Oh yes, he will. Rocket is a very good horse," said Nellie.

"But Will Bligh is not a very good trainer."

"How do you know? Father will help him."

"It strikes me your father will have his hands full, what with one thing and another," said Martha. "What had Lady Betty to say?"

"Not much, and what she remarked might as well have been left unsaid."

"She's a high and mighty one," said Martha.

"She will have a fall one of these days," said Nellie.

"That's hardly likely in her position," said Martha. "Do you like Sir Leigh?"

"Oh yes, he is much kinder than his sister."

Martha had her views about Sir Leigh's calling to see Fred Shirley.

"He came to look at Nellie, that's what he came for; and he's no man if he isn't satisfied. My word, it would be a take down for his sister if he fell in love with my girl."

Martha always thought of Nellie as "my girl."

"There'll be some hearts damaged with her bright eyes before long," ruminated Martha. "There's Will Bligh. Anyone can see he's head-over-ears in love with her. There's Mr Foyd; he had eyes for no one else. Can't say I like him; he's shifty. He'd not make a woman happy. It would be a grand thing for my girl to be Lady Herbert; she's fit for it. She'd look well as

Sir Leigh's Sister

hostess at Bourne Hall, that she would. She's every bit as good as Sir Leigh. He'd be lucky to get her. There's plenty of time; she's young yet, and I don't want to lose her."

"Pretty little thing," said Betty to her brother.

"Miss Shirley? Yes. Wants taming down. She would have liked to be impertinent had she dared," said Betty.

"You were not very amiable towards her."

"I could not treat her as an equal."

"Why not?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Leigh, she is only a trainer's daughter," said Betty.

"The Shirleys are a very old family. Besides, I think she deserves to be treated well on her own account," he said.

"You are like all the men. A pretty face causes you to lose your judgment," said Betty.

"I think she is a jolly girl," said Leigh.

"Jolly is very different to lady-like."

"But she is lady-like," he remonstrated.

"Of course if you are going into silly raptures over her, I have nothing more to say, but I would point out to you that it will not be for her good for Sir Leigh Herbert to be seen too often in her company, or calling at her father's house," said Betty.

"You are always looking for trouble," said her brother sharply.

"There is plenty in the world that cannot be avoided; it requires no searching for," she said.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I hope you will drop this foolish idea to buy race-horses."

Sir Leigh laughed as he said, "I must have some amusement."

"You are Master of the Hounds; that will take up most of your time next winter."

"It will not interfere with my racing."

"But your racing may interfere with the hunting."

"On the contrary, I shall ride some of the horses. It will be good training for them."

"I hope you will not ride in races," she said.

"Why not?"

"Because of your position in the county."

Sir Leigh laughed as he said, "My position in the county is assured. I think you are a trifle overbearing, Betty."

"I am not. You require someone to look after you," she said in her confident manner.

"And you intend doing so?" he asked, smiling.

"I intend coming to stay at Bourne Hall more frequently. I think you will need my advice," she said.

"I am always open to listen to good advice," he replied.

CHAPTER VIII

ROCKET

WILL BLIGH put up fences in a large field at the back of the house, where he practised Rocket over the jumps. The horse shaped well. Will handled him skilfully; his fencing was clean. There was no doubt he had made a bargain.

Rocket was sixteen and a half hands high, and brown, with black legs, not a speck of white on him. He was powerfully built, with good shoulders, strong loins, and powerful quarters. If anything, he was a trifle deficient in speed.

Will knew how to handle horses, he made friends with them. They acknowledged him master. He was never worsted in a fight. Rocket had a temper, not vicious, impetuous, there was only one way of dealing with him, and Will took it. He made Rocket understand that he was desirous of being on good terms with him. At the end of a month Rocket knew all about Will, and Will knew all about Rocket. When they had differences, they were argued out, minus words; a distinct advantage in settling a dispute.

The Trainer's Treasure

Will's actions were convincing. Rocket understood them. There was no whip, he used resolution with far more effect. Rocket soon learned what was required when Will took him into the field where the jumps were erected. He came to like that fie' !; recognised it as a sort of playground where his limbs were exercised, where he felt exhilarated by flying in the air.

At the far side of the field was a plantation; good cover for pheasants. Beyond it was a long stretch of plough, where partridges found breeding space, and they breed well on fallows if there is ample room.

Will was fond of the little brown birds, and gave more attention to them than a keeper, whose mind is generally fixed on the rearing of pheasants to the exclusion of all other game.

Will sowed rye, and vetches in patches, and nothing affords better cover for these birds, as he found out when he let a crop of the latter go to seed. That year there were hundreds of birds on White House Farm. Fortunately, there were few foxes, and the birds were safe. Poachers, however, caused trouble, and one of the ringleaders was Ralph Bidgood.

Rufus Cresfield was not long in finding out about the jumping ground. He watched and saw Will putting Rocket over the hurdles.

"Nice thing this," he said to himself; "converting the best meadow on the farm into a practice ground for horses. It will turn the place into a

Rocket

bog; it will frighten the pheasants. This will not do at all."

He walked into the yard at White House, and saw Will about to take Rocket out.

Will nodded to him, thinking he had come to see how the rebuilding was going on, and was about to mount, when Cresfield said:

"I'd like to have a word or two with you."

"Go ahead, I'm in a hurry," said Will.

"I see you have turned the meadow into a jumping ground," began Cresfield.

"I have put up some hurdles, if that is what you mean," answered Will.

"It will cut the ground up badly; it is the best bit of grass land on the farm," said Cresfield.

"There's no harm done; the meadow will be none the worse for it," said Will.

"I say it will injure it as a pasture; there's another thing—constantly jumping there will frighten the pheasants in the plantation. They may leave it."

Will laughed as he said, "You are making a fuss about nothing; the birds are all right. You'll be saying next it will frighten the partridges in the next field."

"The little birds can take care of themselves; it's the pheasants I'm anxious about."

"You fellows don't think enough of partridges," said Will; "they're often better sport than pheasants."

Cresfield resented his tone, and said sharply,

The Trainer's Treasure

"Sir Leigh has given you the right to shoot game on the farm, more's the pity, but he hasn't given you permission to turn the best meadow into a trial ground for horses."

"He will raise no objections," said Will.

"You'll find out he will when I explain matters to him."

"If you've come here to kick up a row and be disagreeable, you are wasting your time," said Will.

"I'll not have this meadow cut up by a lot of beastly horses," said Cresfield.

"You will not have it cut up," said Will, laughing. "I'd like to know what you have to do with it?"

"That plantation is the best pheasant cover on the farm, and you'll ruin it," said Cresfield.

"If you don't know you are talking nonsense, let me tell you such is the case," said Will.

"I am Sir Leigh's agent, and I mean to look after his interests," said Cresfield.

"I shall take no orders from you," said Will, "and I advise you not to interfere with my plans."

"I shall report the matter to Sir Leigh, and see what he says," was Cresfield's rejoinder.

"You are at liberty to do so; he will not interfere," said Will, mounting Rocket and leaving the irate agent alone.

"I'll make him pay for this," muttered Cresfield. "I wish Sir William ruled; he'd make

Rocket

short work of his jumping schemes. He's no right to have jumpers, neglecting the farm for racing; it's no good to us, not a bit. It must be stopped."

Cresfield stood close to the stables. He saw Cissy Bligh come out, and drew back out of sight. He fixed his eyes on her, and there was a fierce gleam in them. Rufus Cresfield had never desired—love he called it—a woman so much as he did Miss Bligh. His passion for her burned so strong that it bid fair to consume him; and he knew it was hopeless. He had offended her grossly, kissed her when he was in a half-drunken state, and knew she would not forgive him.

He feasted his eyes on her. She was not aware of his presence. Her arms were bare; it was hot, and the front of her dress was thrown open. She had on a thin, light material, which showed her form in full perfection.

Rufus Cresfield wished he possessed her; he would have given anything to have her in his power. So madly infatuated was he that he contemplated strange plans for securing her against her will. As he watched her, his heart beat painfully, his pulses throbbed, his face flushed, his hands clasped and unclasped nervously.

Cissy put down the pail she carried, and stretched her arms above her head. The outline of her figure showed plainly against the background of the dark, thick hedge.

She was going to the kitchen garden to gather

The Trainer's Treasure

fruit; it was too far to go round to the gate, so she climbed the wall, and sat for a moment on the top, then balanced herself, and slipped down on the other side.

Rufus Cresfield watched every movement; she was more careless because she thought she was unobserved.

"She's a beauty," he said to himself. "What a figure! Such arms and limbs, and what a bust! By Heaven, I wish I had her! I'd take her if she were as bad as they make 'em; I almost wish she were, I'd have more chance. I'll get her somehow. There must be a way; I'll think it out. She's worth running any risk for."

He slipped away unseen, and crossed the field where Will was exercising Rocket. The sight made him angry. Will defied him, and Cresfield knew he had very little chance of putting a spoke in his wheel with Sir Leigh.

He walked towards Bourne, raging against Will Bligh, torn with desire for Cissy. His feelings were not enviable. As he walked on he met Ralph Bidgood.

"Where are you going?" said Cresfield.

"That's my business."

"Keep a civil tongue in your head."

"Why do you ask where I am going?"

"Because you have no right on this land."

"Haven't I? Maybe if I'd all my rights I'd own it," he said.

Cresfield laughed.

Rocket

"What are you grinning at?" asked Ralph angrily.

"The mere idea of your owning land or anything else. It's too ridiculous."

"Don't rile me; I'm in a bad temper," said Ralph.

"There's no need to tell me that, I can see it."

"I've got to leave Bourne or work," said Ralph.

"Have you indeed?"

"Sir Leigh, curse him, says I'm a loafer; that I demoralise the young fellows in the village."

"He's right, I'm thinking," said Cresfield.

"He says you will find me work," said Ralph, grinning.

Cresfield looked hard at him. Ralph Budgood might come in useful. Sir Leigh said he, Cresfield, would find him work. Well, he might; far different work to any he expected.

"Seems hard lines you should have to leave Bourne," said Cresfield. "Has Mrs Tapper to go too?"

"Not if I leave, or work."

"I dare say I can give you a job on the estate," said Cresfield.

"Make me head keeper," said Ralph with a hoarse laugh.

"They say a good poacher makes a good keeper," said Cresfield.

"I'd like to catch you giving me a job," said

The Trainer's Treasure

Ralph. "I shouldn't be likely to tackle anything you'd give me."

"Why not?"

"Because it would be too much of a good thing; you want all the soft jobs for your pals."

"Do you like Will Bligh?" asked Cresfield.

"I hate him; he once gave me a thrashing," said Ralph.

"And I hate him too," said Cresfield.

Ralph Bidgood whistled softly; he began to see the drift of things.

"I have heard you are in love with his sister?" said Ralph.

"So I am," said Cresfield; "I'd do anything to get her. By God, man, you don't know what she is to me! I'd give my soul for her, and she'll not look at me. But I'll have her, I tell you; I'll have her," almost shrieked Cresfield, as he gripped Ralph by the arm and dragged him towards the village.

CHAPTER IX

FROM POACHER TO GAMEKEEPER

RALPH BIDGOOD shook off Cresfield's grip and said, "So you're in love with Bligh's sister. You're a fool; she'll not look at you. You've no chance."

"I'll make a chance," foamed Cresfield; "she'll be mine some day."

"Better not meddle with her, or you'll have Bligh down on you," said Ralph.

"I wish he'd break his neck on that brute of a horse," said Cresfield.

"What horse? "

"A beast called Rocket. He's bought him for steeplechasing; he's put up fences in the plantation field, and he's cutting up the ground exercising him "

"Going in for steeplechasing, is he?" said Ralph.

"A farmer has no time for such things, or ought not to have," grumbled Cresfield.

"I suppose he can please himself."

"But he can't cut up the best meadow on the farm."

The Trainer's Treasure

"Who's to stop him?"

"I will."

"How?"

"Tell Sir Leigh about it."

Ralph laughed as he said, "Much good that will do. Sir Leigh's a friend of Bligh's."

"It will ruin the plantation as a cover for pheasants."

"And it's a fine place for them," said Ralph.

"I expect you know all about it?"

"Maybe I do. I keep my eyes open."

"And your hands busy when birds are about. Would you like to be a gamekeeper?" asked Cresfield.

Ralph stared at him, then burst out laughing. The idea tickled his fancy.

"You don't mean it?" he exclaimed.

"I do."

"Is it your own idea?"

"Entirely."

Ralph was cunning. Such an experiment with him would be dangerous. He was not the sort of poacher out of which a good keeper could be made. He saw possibilities in the idea. If he had the run of the place as a keeper, he might do well for himself—with the birds.

"I think the job would suit me," he said; "but what about Sir Leigh?"

"He'd be only too glad to think you were earning your living."

"But would he trust me?"

From Poacher to Gamekeeper

"Why not? I will," said Cresfield.

"What sort of wage?"

"Eighteen shillings a week."

"Not enough."

"Say a pound."

"That's more like it, and a couple of suits and a gun."

"We'll see about it," said Cresfield. "If I get you the job will you do something for me?"

"What is it?"

"I help me to get Cissy Bligh."

"How can I? It depends on her, not on me."

"There may come a time when you'll have a chance; will you help me then?"

"I don't like meddling with women," said Ralph.

"You're afraid of Will Bligh," sneered Cresfield.

"No, I ain't," said Ralph angrily; "nor of you either."

"Well, if you won't help me, I'll not help you."

"I didn't say I would not."

"Will you?"

"Yes, if I have a chance, and no harm is to come to her."

"You don't suppose I'd harm the woman I love?" said Cresfield.

"By the way you spoke and gripped my arm I'm not so sure about it."

The Trainer's Treasure

"I lost my temper; Bligh riled me."

"You hate Bligh?"

"Yes."

There was no mistaking the tone of Cresfield's answer.

"He's a stuck-up fellow," said Ralph.

"You're right. It would be a good thing if Rocket fell with him. He might do if he was startled."

"So he might," said Ralph.

"A gun let off when he was about to jump might do it," said Cresfield.

"So it might. If I were a keeper I could easily manage that," said Ralph.

"You don't like him?" said Cresfield.

"No."

"Why?"

"For reasons I need not mention," said Ralph.

Will Bligh had ordered Ralph off his farm more than once, and had threatened to have him locked up as a poacher.

They walked into the village together, and parted at Mrs Tapper's cottage.

There was a good deal of gossip as to why they were in company; evidently there was something in the wind.

Ralph entered the cottage. Liza Tapper was busy, as usual, shining the ornaments that adorned the mantelpiece. She had them spread out on the table, they shone brightly. She had seen Ralph with Cresfield at the gate. She detested the man;

From Poacher to Gamekeeper

knew he was capable of almost anything. She knew more about him than he was aware.

"What's Cresfield got to say to you?" she asked.

"He's offered me work."

She thought of what Sir Leigh had said.

"What sort of work?"

"Gamekeeper."

She smiled; it seemed so ridiculous.

"What's there to laugh at?" snapped Ralph angrily.

"It is about the last thing I'd have expected him to offer you. Why has he done it?" she said.

"Because I told him if I didn't work I'd have to clear out, and you too."

"Me?"

"Yes. Didn't Sir Leigh say as much?"

"No."

"What did he say?"

"That you must work, or not live here."

"You'd have turned me out?" he asked angrily.

"I would not have left," she replied calmly.

"Look here, am I your son, or am I not?"

She made no answer.

"Whose son am I?" he asked. "I've a right to know."

"Then find out; I can't tell you," she said.

"Was old Sir William my father?"

"That I cannot tell you," she said.

The Trainer's Treasure

"But you know, and I'll force it out of you some day," he said.

She smiled quietly; it always exasperated him.

"I don't believe you are my mother," he said.

"Anyway, I have treated you as a son. I have shielded you, given you a home, paid your debts; you ought to be grateful," she said.

"I am; but why have you done it?" he asked.

"Because I considered it my duty," she answered calmly.

He studied her still comely face. She must have been a fine woman five-and-twenty years ago. It puzzled him why she was in this position; why she accepted a pension from the Herberts. He never remembered seeing Lady Betty in the cottage; why had she not called on Sir William's pensioner, and now her brother's?

"Lady Betty's never been in the cottage," he said.

"She seldom calls at any of the cottages," was the answer.

"But you'd think she'd come here when her brother keeps on paying your pension."

"Perhaps she does not approve of it. I'm told she's very close."

"Mean; mean as dirt!" said Ralph. "I held her horse one day for half an hour and she never said thank you."

"Are you going to take Cresfield's work, act as a keeper?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Rather; it's a great chance," he said.

From Poacher to Gamekeeper

"For what?"

"A nice job; what else?" he asked suspiciously.

"What are you going to do for Cresfield that he has found you such a job?" she asked.

"Going to do for him?" echoed Ralph; "act as gamekeeper, of course."

"Nothing else? Nothing that will assist him personally?"

"No, why should I?"

"Because Cresfield is a man who always has some scheme in his head, and he'd not give you a post as keeper unless he could get something in return. Be wary where he is concerned, Ralph; he's a bad man," she said.

"He's all right. Besides, how do you know so much about him?"

"It is sufficient that I know. I warn you against him. Don't do any dirty work for him."

She replaced the ornaments on the mantelpiece, swept the table, and went into the next room.

Ralph smoked and brooded over what she had said. He wondered what she knew about Cresfield. He had no liking for the man, and was aware he would not have been offered the post of keeper had Cresfield not had his own ends to serve. He had promised to help him to get Cissy Bligh if he could, also to injure Will Bligh, and, dissolute as he was, he felt rather ashamed of himself.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I've half a mind to take the job and act square," he muttered; "if I did, Sir Leigh would give me a lift. Will Bligh's no friend to me, but I fancy if I did him a good turn, it would be better than working in with Cresfield. I'll see how things go, and which side will pay me best. I'm afraid I'll never be able to keep my hands off the birds. Lor', what a time I could have with 'em if I were a keeper!"

"Ralph, will you fetch me some water from the well?" said Mrs Tapper.

He got up at once and went for it.

"This is an improvement," she thought.

"Anything else?" he asked, as he brought it in.

"You'll find plenty to do in the shed at the back; there's wood to chop."

"I'll soon settle that," he said.

"What's come over him?" she thought. "It can't be Cresfield. He's working something off his mind that he wants to be rid of; that's what it is."

Rufus Cresfield mentioned to Sir Leigh about Will Bligh training Rocket on the meadow, and stated his objections.

"I see no cause to interfere," said Sir Leigh; "Mr Bligh has a perfect right to exercise his horse there. I am glad he is going in for a little sport; all farmers should do so."

"It will disturb the pheasants," said Cresfield.

"I don't think so. I wish you would leave

From Poacher to Gamekeeper

Bligh alone, and not interfere with him; I like him, and his sister too."

Cresfield scowled at him. Was Sir Leigh going to cast eyes on Miss Bligh? He spoke about appointing Ralph Bidgood as gamekeeper, and Sir Leigh laughed.

"If he can keep his poaching instincts down, he will probably make a good keeper," he said.

"Then you approve of what I have done?"

"You have already seen him about it?"

"Yes, and he is only too willing to take the post."

"You think he will go straight?" asked Sir Leigh.

"Yes, he dare not do otherwise," said Cresfield.

"I shall have my eye on him."

"Very well, we can give him a trial," said Sir Leigh. "I hope he will turn out well; it's an experiment."

"And about Mr Bligh?" ventured Cresfield.

"Leave him alone. I'll see him, and give him a hint not to disturb the birds," said Sir Leigh, and with this Cresfield had to be satisfied.

CHAPTER X

DISCUSSING MR FLOYD

"We had visitors while you were away," said Nellie to her father. "Sir Leigh and his sister called."

"Lady Betty?"

"Yes; she is a spitfire," said Nellie.

Fred Shirley laughed.

"She has a sharp tongue," he said.

"It's so sharp that it cuts," she answered.

"What did Sir Leigh come about?"

She told him; Fred seemed pleased. He liked the idea of advising him in buying horses.

"I'm drifting into harness again, Nellie," he said.

"But you will not train?" she asked.

"No."

"I am glad of that. I want you at home; Meadow Water is such a sweet place."

"It is, my girl; and I am not likely to be away from it longer than I can help."

As he looked at her he thought it might not be

Discussing Mr Floyd

long before someone claimed her, and he would be left alone. He sighed as he thought of such a possibility.

"What's the matter?" asked Nellie. "What a sigh!"

"I wondered how long it would be before you found a husband?"

"Husband! I want no one but you, Father," said Nellie, kissing him.

He shook his head as he said, "Someone is sure to claim you before long."

"I have seen no one I care about at present; not in that way."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Quite."

Fred rode to White House with Nellie, and Will Bligh brought Rocket out and put him over the jumps.

Fred watched the horse closely. He knew a good deal about jumpers; Hector Floyd had been partial to the sport.

As Will pulled up, after going twice round, Fred said:

"Rocket is something out of the common; he ought to pay his way. He fences well. You bought him cheap."

"You think he'll turn out well?" asked Will eagerly.

"Yes, no doubt about that. Do you know Sir Leigh is going in for a few jumpers?"

"No, is he?" said Will. "I'm afraid I shall

The Trainer's Treasure

not have much chance against him; he can pick and choose. I have to take what I can get."

"You have made a very good start," said Nellie. She had dismounted, and was stroking Rocket's neck, the bridle of her horse slung over her arm.

"Why, here's Sir Leigh coming," she said, as he rode towards them.

"A consultation," said Sir Leigh, greeting them. "That's a smart horse, Bligh! Do you want to sell him?"

"No; I have only just bought him."

"He's a capital fencer," said Fred.

"I hear you are going in for jumpers," said Will.

"Half a dozen or so. I shall hunt them as well next season."

"And I intend giving Rocket some runs with the hounds," said Will.

"I shall have to get a fresh mount if I am to have a chance of keeping up with you," said Nellie, laughing.

"You are generally in the first flight, no matter what you ride," said Sir Leigh, looking at her admiringly.

"Has Cresfield said anything about my putting up jumps here?" asked Will.

"He mentioned it, seemed to raise objections, but I told him it would do no harm. He said it would make the pheasants wild; drive them out of the plantation. What do you think?"

Discussing Mr Floyd

Will smiled as he replied, "I think Cresfield likes to interfere with me. As for the pheasants, I shall not disturb them."

"I have given Ralph Bidgood a chance of earning his living," said Sir Leigh.

"It's about time he turned his hands to work," said Will.

Cissy Bligh appeared at the gate near the house, and waved to Nellie, who rode off to her.

"What's Bidgood going to do?" asked Will.

"Act as gamekeeper."

They all laughed. It seemed a risky experiment.

"He'll never keep his hands off the birds," said Fred.

"Cresfield holds a different opinion. He thinks he'll make a very fair keeper," said Sir Leigh.

"He has had plenty of experience," said Will, smiling, wondering why Cresfield had suddenly taken a fancy to Ralph.

"Will you put Rocket over the hurdles again so that Sir Leigh can see how he jumps?" said Fred.

Will turned his horse round, then put him at a couple of jumps.

"He's a clinker," said Sir Leigh.

"Not much doubt about it. You will be lucky if you get one as good for the money," said Fred.

"We must try. I am not anxious to run up against Bligh; I'd like to see him win a race or two."

The Trainer's Treasure

"He's almost certain to do that if he rides well," said Fred.

"I hear you are going to manage Mr Floyd's team?"

"Nellie told you, I suppose. She said you called with your sister."

"Yes, we did. Betty rather amused your daughter, I think," said Sir Leigh. "I suppose you will be frequently at Newmarket?"

"I shall run down when necessary, but I can trust Max Brandon."

"And cannot Mr Floyd?"

"They don't hit it very well, but I think the fault is on Floyd's side."

"Your daughter said he had spent most of his life in Australia?"

"He has. He came home when his father died; he is not much like the Floyds."

"A wealthy man?"

"He must be; his father had several valuable properties," said Fred. "I was much surprised when he turned up at Meadow Water."

"I shall probably meet him. I wonder if he will come here during the hunting season?"

"I dare say he will," said Fred, "he sits a horse well."

"Fine jumper, Bligh," said Sir Leigh.

"He is, and he'll improve a lot before the end of the year," said Will. "May I ask you to come to the house and have some refreshment, Sir Leigh?"

Discussing Mr Floyd

"Thanks, I don't mind if I do," he answered, and they rode towards the house.

Cissy waited on them, and Nellie helped her. Sir Leigh thought it would be hard to match them; they looked so fresh, bright, and healthy.

Before he left, he asked Cissy if there was anything she required doing to the house.

Will laughed as he said, "I hope she will not be bashful. She told me the old place ought to be pulled down and rebuilt."

Cissy blushed as she said, "Not quite so bad as that, Sir Leigh; but I assure you there are many things want attending to."

"If you will give me the particulars they shall be done," he said.

She thanked him, and Will went out with him into the yard, where the horses stood; Fred followed.

"Cissy, you take them all by storm," said Nellie. "It was not fair to Sir Leigh; how could he refuse you?"

"Don't be silly, Nell," said Cissy, laughing.

"You captured Mr Floyd, now it's Sir Leigh. No one else has a chance against you," said Nellie.

"I know someone not very far away whom Sir Leigh admires; anyone can see it."

"Who is it?"

"Miss Nellie Shirley."

"Me! little me! I have no chance against you, Cissy; you're such a dasher."

The Trainer's Treasure

"Am I indeed! A farmer's daughter! Not much of the dasher about me."

"I am a trainer's daughter; what chance is there for me to make a capture?"

"Every chance, Nell; you have only to fix those bright eyes on a male and he succumbs. Old Berry told me the other day you were the sweetest flower in the country," said Cissy.

"Amos had just been bribed with a tankard of ale; it loosened his tongue."

"He is an old gossip, but I can't help liking him; he's so quaint," said Cissy.

"Lady Betty seems to have decided to remain at the Hall," said Nellie. "I can't bear her; she's overwhelming."

"I think Sir Leigh will be relieved when she departs," said Cissy.

"If he marries, what a dance she will lead his wife," said Nellie.

"Rather a formidable sister-in-law, I confess."

"She's more of a man than a woman."

"And yet she is handsome, there's no denying it."

"I wish someone would marry her," said Nellie.

"Poor man, whoever he is," laughed Cissy.

"As father has taken over the management of Mr Floyd's horses, he will probably come to Meadow Water again before long," said Nellie.

"What do you think of him?" asked Cissy.

"I hardly know. He's good-looking, but when

Discussing Mr Floyd

you catch him thinking he hasn't a very pleasant expression; he struck me as a man who had something on his mind," said Nellie.

"Most men have."

"You know what I mean; something he intended keeping to himself."

"A secret?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps he did something terrible in Australia," said Cissy mockingly.

"He may have done; I hope not. I shall study him next time he comes to Meadow Water."

"What does your father think of him? He is a good judge of men."

"To whom do you refer?" asked Fred, as he entered the room and overheard her remark.

"Mr Floyd," said Nellie; "we were discussing him."

"Yes; what do you think of him?" asked Cissy.

"I do not know him well enough to pass an opinion," said Fred.

"Have you formed any ideas about him?" asked Cissy.

"Well, yes, I have."

"Divulge," said Nellie, laughing.

"I think he is a man who can be very determined, also that he could be dangerous where ladies are concerned," said Fred, smiling.

"We are warned," said Nellie; "we must be careful and label him dangerous."

The Trainer's Treasure

"Nellie said she thought he had something on his mind, a secret," said Cissy.

"Perhaps he has; many men have," said Fred.

"You had better have none from me," said Nellie, shaking her hand at him.

"It would be very difficult to keep a secret from you," said her father, laughing; "what do you think, Will?"

"No man could resist her," answered Will, smiling.

"Rubbish; you don't mean it," said Nellie.

"I do," said Will.

"Billy, you grow more ridiculous every day," she said.

CHAPTER XI

A QUARREL WITH THE TRAINER

MAX BRANDON was anxious about his sister. He had not heard from her since she left Newmarket. He wondered if Quintin Floyd had anything to do with her disappearance; he had paid her much attention at times.

"If he's done her any wrong, I'll be even with him," said Max.

At last he made up his mind to question Floyd. It was the worst thing he could have done under the circumstances.

Quintin Floyd often came to Newmarket to see his horses in work. He was not at all satisfied at Fred Shirley's decision merely to manage the establishment. He wished he had taken over the training; perhaps if he got rid of Brandon he might do so.

They had just returned from the heath when Max said suddenly, "Mr Floyd, do you know where my sister is?"

Max saw him start, and thought, "I am sure he knows."

"What a ridiculous question to ask me," he answered.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Not at all. You were very friendly with her, more so than I wished; it was about you we quarrelled. I believe you know where she is," said Max.

"Nonsense, man; how should I know?" answered Floyd angrily, adding to himself, "Hang his impertinence."

"Will you answer my question? Do you know where she is?" said Max.

"No," said Floyd, "is she not old enough to take care of herself?"

"She ought to be," said Max; "but some women are never safe from certain men."

There was no mistaking the hint, and Floyd resented the imputation that he was one of these men.

"You and I have been at loggerheads for some time," he said. "I think we had better part; you have been impertinent, and I resent it."

"You can take your horses away as soon as you wish," said Max.

"Very well; I will do so. I had, as you know, made arrangements with Fred Shirley to manage my stud, but I dare say I can prevail upon him to train them. As for your sister, I strongly resent your remarks. You don't suppose I induced her to leave you?"

"That's just what I think," said Max.

"Confound you, I am not in the habit of inducing women to leave their homes," said Floyd angrily.

A Quarrel with the Trainer

"I'll give you a word of warning," said Max. "If I find you are responsible for her disappearance, I'll make you pay for it."

Floyd laughed as he said, "Your suspicions are too absurd; I should not be likely to run off with my trainer's sister."

"No; why not?"

"Because she is not my sort. If I wanted a companion, I should choose one from my own class," said Floyd.

"Your class!" sneered Max; "I've seen enough of your class in my time. You're not a bit like your father; I can hardly believe you are his son. If you are, there's been a mistake somewhere."

Quintin Floyd turned pale, then his face went almost livid. Max looked at him, surprised.

"By God, if you say that again I'll——" said Floyd, raising his hand, then controlling himself, and dropping it.

Max said nothing more; he turned round and went into the house.

"I've done it now," he thought, "and I'm not sorry. I could not go on training for him, because I believe he knows where Daisy is. She's always been one of the flighty sort, but I didn't think she'd go so far as this. It's his fault; he's tempted her, but I'll find her, and if he's harmed her there'll be trouble."

He found Bob Dennis, the jockey, in his room. Ever since Daisy Brandon went away he had been

The Trainer's Treasure

a different man. He saw by Brandon's face there was something wrong.

"What's up, Max?" he asked.

"I've quarrelled with Floyd, damn him."

"It's not the first time."

"But it's the last."

"You've parted company?"

"He's going to take his horses away."

"I'm glad of it; I hate the fellow. What are you going to do?"

"Leave here if I can; get a billet as private trainer. I'm sick of the place."

"Why?"

"I can't bear to stay here now Daisy's gone. I'm always thinking someone is talking about it. When I walk down the street I fancy people look at me and snigger; I can't stand it, Bob!"

The jockey got up from his chair and stood before him.

"You know I love your sister, Max, and I believe she would have loved me had Floyd not come between us."

"She might; I believe she would. I wish she had."

"Tell me straight out what you think," said Bob.

"You mean about her going away?"

"Yes."

"I believe he knows where she is."

"So do I, and we'll find her; he shan't have her," said the jockey savagely.

A Quarrel with the Trainer

"It is easier said than done," was Max's reply.

"You've had him followed?"

"Yes."

"And nothing has come of it?"

"No."

"He may have noticed he was being stalked and bought the man off."

"I don't think it's likely, but such things have been done."

"And are now. If your sister wishes to remain hidden it is because she is under Floyd's influence."

"I wonder——" began Max.

"What? Go on."

"If he has married her."

Bob Dennis staggered back against the table.

"You don't think that?" he gasped.

"It will be the best thing for her."

"Tied for life to that man!" said Bob.

"It's better than disgrace," said Max.

"Daisy would never become the plaything of Quintin Floyd," said Bob.

"I hope you are right, but when a woman loses her head over a man, as she has over him, there's no telling what will happen."

"I have more faith in her than you," said Bob.

"Why did she leave home?" asked Max.

"That's it," said Bob; "she may have been induced to go."

The Trainer's Treasure

"She told me she was going," said Max.

"Then she may have some reason for remaining away."

"There can only be one cause," said Max.

"Don't say that; I'll never believe it," said Bob. "I'll never ride for Floyd again."

The trainer and jockey had been friends for a long time, and it was well known Bob Dennis was in love with Daisy Brandon. Since her absence from Newmarket comments were freely made, as she had often been seen with Quintin Floyd. No remarks were addressed to the jockey, as he was popular, but Max Brandon had very few friends, and there was no attempt to conceal opinions from him.

Quintin Floyd returned to London the same afternoon. He was not ill-pleased at breaking with Brandon; he was firmly convinced, now he had done so, that Fred Shirley would take over the horses. Arriving in London, he went to his flat in St James's Street, and wrote to Fred Shirley, explaining that he had finally decided to have done with Max Brandon, as he could not put up with his impertinence any longer. "To-day he actually accused me of taking his sister away. The thing is abominable, and, of course, I could not put up with it."

He asked Fred to reconsider his decision, and made him a very liberal offer to train his horses.

The night's post brought him a letter. When he saw the handwriting he gave an exclamation of

A Quarrel with the Trainer

impatience. He read it, and the contents evidently displeased him.

"Confound her! Why can't she be satisfied?" he muttered. "She has plenty of money; that's all women want."

Later on he went to Waterloo and took the train to Kingston. He called at a pleasantly situated house near the river, and found Daisy Brandon waiting for him.

"It is a week since you have been here," she said; "I thought you were never coming."

"I told you not to write to me," he said angrily.

"I had to; I could not bear it any longer. Quintin, you are not treating me fairly. You induced me to come here, and said you would fix the wedding-day as soon as possible; you have not done so. When is it to be?" she asked.

"Oh, there's plenty of time. Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Because I am beginning to mistrust you."

"You have no reason to do so."

"Prove to me you love me as you said you did, and make me your wife."

"All in good time. You have not shown much confidence in me so far."

"I have; I left my brother in order to marry you. I could not have done more."

He laughed; not a pleasant laugh. It was not what he expected when he induced her to leave home. He had set his match; Bob Dennis was right.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Do you wish to return to him?" he asked.

"No; at least not until we are married."

Quintin Floyd was about to say something she would have resented deeply, but checked himself in time. He had no intention of acknowledging himself beaten yet. What he said was:

"I have parted with your brother, I am taking my horses away."

"You said you would not, you promised me," she said.

"Circumstances have altered. He insulted me; he actually said I knew where you were, that I had induced you to leave him."

"Both assertions are true."

"I denied them of course. He became positively insulting; made all kinds of ridiculous threats of which I took no notice."

Daisy Brandon was already repenting the step she had taken. So far no harm had come of it, but she was in a compromising position, and wished to get out of it by marrying Quintin Floyd.

"It's a long way to come here to see you," said Floyd carelessly; "can't you put me up for the night?"

"No; that is quite impossible," said Daisy firmly.

CHAPTER XII

A CHILD OF THE COUNTRY

BEFORE Fred Shirley answered Quintin Floyd's letter, he received one from Max Brandon, in which the trainer explained what had happened. He asked Fred if he could get him a place as private trainer.

It occurred to Fred that Sir Leigh would be likely to avail himself of Brandon's services. Although he had horses in training at Newmarket, he would probably feel disposed to place his 'chaser under such a man as Brandon, who had been a celebrated cross-country rider before he joined Fred Shirley.

Fred wrote to Quintin Floyd declining his proposal, and rode to Bourne to see Sir Leigh. As usual Nellie went with him; they were inseparable.

Sir Leigh was at home; he welcomed them kindly. His sister was away, for which he was thankful.

Fred explained how matters stood, and highly recommended Brandon.

"He is just the man for you if you intend training your jumpers at home."

The Trainer's Treasure

"I had thought of doing so," said Sir Leigh.

"Now you have recommended Brandon, I will; there is plenty of room, and the horses will be handy for me to ride in the hunting season."

"Will you give him the post?" asked Fred.

"Yes. What about terms?"

"I do not think there will be any difficulty about them," said Fred.

Sir Leigh was attracted by Nellie. He thought her a splendid girl, wished to see more of her. He knew how attached father and daughter were, and hoped Fred Shirley would be on his side if he decided on a step he was already contemplating.

His sister knew nothing of his intentions, nor had he any desire she should at present. Nellie was aware Sir Leigh regarded her with favour; she hardly knew how she felt about him. She was young; there was plenty of time to consider such an important step as matrimony. She had told her father she regarded no one in the light of a possible husband, and this was true. She was fancy free at present, although she had preferences, such as Will Bligh and Sir Leigh, and possibly Quintin Floyd, from what little she had seen of him.

Sir Leigh chatted with her, took her round the gardens and conservatories, interested her in the surroundings of Bourne Hall.

Fred was gratified at the attention paid her. He was always pleased when anyone noticed his

A Child of the Country

treasure; he thought there was no one like her in the world.

They remained at the Hall for lunch, where they left Sir Leigh, who had decided to engage Max Brandon, and left the arrangements to Fred. As they rode home their eyes roamed over the beautiful scenes mapped out before them. They loved the country. Fred Shirley was pleased things had turned out as they had; he did not care to manage Quintin Floyd's horses, although he accepted the position, and he would have no occasion to leave Meadow Water at intervals to make journeys to Newmarket.

"Isn't it just lovely?" said Nellie. "The view down the valley is perfect. I cannot imagine anything more beautiful; and look at the old place nestling in the hollow. There never was a prettier home than dear old Meadow Water."

"Not even Bourne Hall?" said Fred.

"Bourne Hall, indeed! It is a grand old house, but Meadow Water is worth a dozen such places. The Hall gives me the creeps; reminds me of ghosts, and other things—Lady Betty, for instance," she said.

"Sir Leigh is a lucky young fellow. He has a fine estate, and he promises to be a good landlord. Sir William was a hard man. Although he went the pace in his young days, he was too careful in his old age; he must have piled up the money."

"I can imagine money under certain circum-

The Trainer's Treasure

stances being a nuisance," said Nellie. "No one can be happier than we are in our simple way."

"We should feel the pinch if we ran short of cash," said Fred, laughing.

"I wish Will Bligh had more money," she said.

"Then it would not be a nuisance to him?"

"Of course not. I was not thinking of men in his position; he works. I was referring to the idlers; the men who inherit money, who have never done any work."

"Rich men, men with large, landed estates, like Sir Leigh, do more work than you imagine. They can do a great deal of good if they like."

"And a great deal of harm."

"I do not think Sir Leigh is one of that sort."

"Nor do I. I like him, and here comes someone else I like too—Billy," said Nellie.

Will Bligh was walking along the road, dressed as usual in his working suit, which seemed to enhance his appearance as a man. His face brightened as he saw Nellie; he was always glad to meet her. No one but himself knew the devotion he had for her. A big, strong man, well able to defend a slip of a girl from the world's rough usage. A reliable man, whose word was his bond, who thought work, hard work, the highest form of usefulness. Will Bligh never shirked; he often worked alongside his men. He had gone through it all; knew what was a fair division of labour.

A Child of the Country

"Billy, you are dirtier than ever," was Nellie's greeting.

"I ought to have an estate some day; the land seems to stick to me," he said.

"I hope you will," she said; "then you will have time to spruce yourself up a bit. We've been to call at the Hall."

"And of course Sir Leigh was immaculate and clean," said Will.

"He was, polished up to perfection," said Nellie.

"And most attentive," said Fred, smiling.

"Small wonder at it," thought Will, as he looked at her; "there's not much chance for a plain fellow like me against the owner of Bourne Hall."

"I think Sir Leigh is the right man in the right place," he said.

"My friend, Max Brandon, is coming here to train Sir Leigh's hurdle racers," said Fred.

"Is he? That's news; has he given up Mr Floyd's horses?" asked Will.

"Yes; they never hit it well, and I think Brandon will like the change. He'll suit you, Will; he's a good sort."

"I must get round him," said Will, laughing.

"He'll be able to help me to place Rocket where he will not run up against Sir Leigh's horses."

"He has not bought any yet, and I don't think you'll have much to fear with such a horse as Rocket," said Fred.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I shall love to see you win your first race," said Nellie.

"That's very kind of you," he answered.

"Not at all; I'm going to back you and Rocket. Self-interest, you see."

"Is that all?" asked Will.

"Of course; what more do you expect?"

"Well, I thought you might be glad to see my horse win because he was mine."

"And so I shall, you old stupid. I hope you'll beat Sir Leigh the first time you meet."

"I shall have a good chance if you wish me luck."

"I'll wish you all the luck you deserve. What are your colours?"

"I have not chosen them."

"Let me do it for you?"

"With pleasure."

"I have it; beautiful, simply exquisite."

"What are they?" asked Will eagerly.

Fred looked on amused.

"White jacket, rose sleeves and cap—there!"

"Glorious," said Will; "couldn't be better. White and rose; splendid."

"Rather gaudy," said Fred.

"Not a bit of it," said Nellie; "soft and delicate. If you come to grief in them on a muddy day, they'll suffer."

"There's not much fear of him coming to grief on Rocket," said Fred.

A Child of the Country

Will walked on, and turning round before he opened the gate into the barn close, shouted.

"I'll not forget the colours, Nellie."

She waved her hand and then put her horse in a canter.

"There'll be complications before long," thought Fred. "There's Will and Sir Leigh, and there'll be more. I hope my little girl's head won't be turned with flattery; I think not."

Nellie never gave a thought to Will or Sir Leigh as she cantered down the hill ahead of her father. She was lighthearted and free as the pure air of the high land she breathed. She always felt stifled in big cities. When she went to London with her father, she was anxious to be home again. Her chief delight on such occasions was to watch the horses in the Row, picking out those she liked best. She was bored with the huge crowds; a feeling of repulsion came over her when she saw painted women, and girls with old faces. In the shops, scented women made her gasp for breath, long to inhale the fresh air. The close atmosphere stifled her; a weight seemed to press her down. Once in the train, bound for home, she became herself again. She would never make a town girl, she loved the open country, plenty of room to roam, where wild flowers grew, and birds sang, and there were cattle on a hundred hills.

And Fred Shirley was always glad to return from the bustle and sit down at Meadow Water with his treasure. He had seen much of the dark

The Trainer's Treasure

side of life, the worst of human nature, and knew where peace dwelt and happiness reigned. His life had been active. He had always been fully occupied until he decided to settle down and leave the roar of the course for the silence of the hills and valleys. He liked to return to the bustle of racing sometimes, out of sheer love of the sport. Horses fascinated him, and his judgment where they were concerned was unerring. Many a good one had he picked up at yearling sales at a low price.

But what he loved best was to be at Meadow Water with Nellie, to watch her flitting about the house and garden, to think she had not a care in the world, that she was far removed from the haunts of sin and temptation. He vowed she should be kept pure and untainted in the country air if he could compass it, that his treasure should never be defiled by coming in contact with impurity.

He regarded her as a great trust, given him to take care of, and he meant doing it. He knew his treasure was worthy of all this, and it made him glad. He rose up in the morning calling down blessings on her head, and he went to bed at night with the name of his treasure on his lips. He had said to himself many times, if anything happened to her his light would go out, and he would die.

CHAPTER XIII

A RIDE ON ROCKET

THE treasure—otherwise Nellie Shirley—was always up early and out in the fresh morning air, while the dew lingered on the grass in diamond drops, and the birds carolled their songs in the trees. Her father, used to early rising as he had been all his life, seldom appeared before her.

On this particular morning she was down first. She slipped back the bolts noiselessly, and opened the front door, inhaling the cool breeze as it wafted round her. She stretched out her arms to it in pure joy. Her whole body thrilled with delightful freshness. A slight mist crept up the valley, gradually lifting, then floating away into space. On the hill she saw White House Farm, and the cows entering the yard to be milked. Then she saw Will Bligh ride out, wondering why he was not staying to milk, as usual. He seldom neglected it. She knew it was Will, even at that distance; his figure was so familiar.

She went round to the back of the house, called her cob up to the gate of the paddock, led him into

The Trainer's Treasure

the yard, then opened the stable door, when he went in, and she saddled him. She wore a divided skirt, as she generally did in the morning, and was soon in the saddle. She saw her father open his window as she passed the front of the house, and called out a cheery good morning.

"Where's the madcap off to now?" he thought, but without anxiety. He knew his treasure was safe on the country-side.

Nellie rode slowly up Garth Hill; at the top she opened the gate and went into White House pastures. There was no one about; she felt disappointed. Where had Will Bligh gone? He was not in the plantation field, nor could she see him in any of the meadows near.

"Well, I'm sure I am not going to look for him," she muttered, although she was searching for him with her keen eyes.

At last she saw him coming round the plantation corner; it was the short cut to Bourne. Had he been to the village so early?

He was surprised to see her, at the same time delighted.

"Where are you going so early?" he asked.

"Where have you been?" she said.

"To Bourne; I expected some goods by the first train, and I did not want to waste time in sending for them if they had not arrived," he said.

"And they were there?"

"Yes."

"When are you going to bring Rocket out?"

A Ride on Rocket

"I'll get him now if you'll wait and see him jump," he said.

"Very well; you'll not be long?"

"No, only a few minutes."

He cantered away, and before long rode Rocket into the field.

The horse seemed fresh, and inclined to be skittish, but cooled down as he went over the jumps. He was a splendid mover, a sure fencer, and Nellie was seized with a desire to ride him. She was one of the best horsewomen in the Valley Harriers country, and had never been known to decline a jump, however stiff.

"Will, I wish you'd let me try a fence or two on Rocket," she said, as he pulled up.

He looked surprised. He did not like to refuse her, but there might be danger.

"Do, please," she pleaded, seeing him hesitate.

"I don't think it would be right," he said; "your father would not like it. Supposing anything happened, I should never forgive myself."

"Nothing is likely to happen," she said; "Rocket is a safe jumper, and I can ride."

"Yes, I know that, but I dare not risk it, Nellie; indeed I dare not," he said earnestly.

"What nonsense! I have set my mind upon it; I must have a ride. It's mean of you; I believe you are afraid of the horse coming to some harm."

"I am far more afraid of you being injured," he said.

"I can ride, can't I, silly man?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"Yes, very few can ride better; it's not that."

"Then pray what is it?"

"If you rode Rocket your father would be very angry with me."

"Oh no, he would not, I'll tell him as soon as I get home."

"And I shall have him round here half an hour later, scolding me," said Will, showing signs of relenting, which she was not slow to perceive.

She dismounted, and stood looking up at him, a bewitching little figure; she fascinated him, the strong man was as a child in her small hands. She had some idea of her power, but not a tithe of the reality. She smiled at him as she placed her hand on his knee.

"Get off, Will, and put me up," she said.

"Do, there's a dear fellow."

How could he resist her? It was impossible; he gave way, and, getting out of the saddle, said, "I have no business allowing you to ride him, but you make me do it; you don't know your power."

"Then you do like me a little bit, Will; about so much?" and she spread out her hands.

He felt an irresistible impulse to take her in his arms and crush her, the little torment, but she was sacred to him; he would not have alarmed her for worlds. He knew she trusted him, and loved her the more for it.

"Get it over," he said, "I shall be in misery until you dismount."

A Ride on Rocket

"There's nothing to be afraid of; I will be careful."

He took her little foot in his hand and lifted her on to Rocket's back; the horse was surprised at the feather weight.

"Be very careful for your father's sake, and mine," he said.

"And what about my own?"

"Rocket carries a precious burden," said Will, patting the horse.

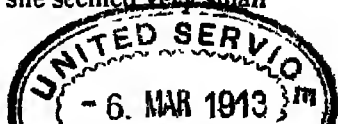
"Shall you be very angry if I damage him?" she asked.

"So long as you are safe I do not care."

She rode Rocket round to the first fence, set him at it, and he flew over in fine style.

"By Jove, she sits him well!" muttered Will, forgetting all about the danger in his admiration for her riding. There was one big jump he meant telling her to avoid, but forgot. It was a made bank, with rails on the take-off side; as she drew near it he gasped. There was no time to stop her, it would only spoil the jump; make it more dangerous. Nellie saw the formidable obstacle, and gripped Rocket firmly; a big jump always caused her courage to rise. Will watched, breathless, and as Rocket rose at the fence his heart was in his mouth. He knew the horse would clear it, but how would Nellie manage it? He need have had no fears about her had he known the extent of her courage.

When he saw her in the air she seemed very small



The Trainer's Treasure

on Rocket. He knew the depth of his love for her; it was as though his whole life hung in the balance, and he was waiting for the end. The perspiration stood on his forehead; he shivered, then as Rocket landed safely, he gave a great sigh of relief. A feeling of exultation possessed him; he shouted and clapped his hands.

"Splendid, splendid," he said as she rode up, "but you must not do it again. You don't know how I felt as I saw Rocket rise at that big jump. Good Heavens! if anything had happened, what should I have done?"

"Rushed to the rescue," said Nellie, smiling. "Were you very much afraid for me?"

"I don't know exactly how I felt; you are a wonderful rider."

"Rocket is such a beauty, anyone could ride him."

"But he wants handling; he has a bit of a temper," said Will.

"Lift me down, I'm up so high."

He held her in his arms for a moment, a precious moment, then he put her lightly down; she felt he was loath to let her go, and the thought pleased her. She nestled up against him.

"You big, strong Billy; how kind you are to me! You always have been, ever since I was a little mite in short frocks."

"I should be a brute if I were not kind to you," he thought.

"He would be a queer sort of man who was not

A Ride on Rocket

kind to you, Nellie," he said, his eyes shining into hers.

"All men are not as good as you."

"May you never meet a bad one," said Will.

They were very near to one another as they spoke. Their thoughts mingled; Will had some difficulty in restraining himself, but he did.

"I'm not good enough for her," he kept saying to himself; "I'm too big and rough. Let any man make her unhappy if he dare; by God, I'll kill him!"

He put her on her cob, held her hand for a few seconds, pressed it in his firm grip, then let her go. He watched her ride towards the gate, she kissed her hand to him as she went through.

"Rocket, my boy, you carried a treasure this morning," he said, as he walked beside the horse. "She's the sweetest girl in the country; she's too good for a rough fellow like me, but if I thought she could love me, I'd be the happiest man alive. I'd show her what love meant," and he clenched his big, strong hands.

When Fred Shirley heard his treasure had ridden Rocket over the jumps, he stormed at Will Bligh until Nellie quietened him.

"You must not blame Will," she said; "he could not help himself. I made him give in; he tried hard to get out of it, but had to succumb. He's a dear, good fellow."

"I will give him a bit of my mind when I see him," said Fred.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Don't, please, just to oblige little me," said Nellie, seating herself on his knee, taking his face between her hands, and kissing him.

This treatment proved irresistible, as usual, and he promised to be very mild with Will Bligh when he spoke about his treasure's ride on Rocket.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MAN AT THE CORNER

MAX BRANDON took up his quarters in Bourne—the stables were attached to the Hall, and his house was not far away.

Sir Leigh liked him from the first, they got on well together, and Max was grateful to him for giving him the position, and also to Fred Shirley for recommending him.

Fred went about the country buying a horse here and there, until he had a useful half-dozen in the Hall stables.

Sir Leigh was satisfied, although he did not think there was one in the lot equal to Rocket.

Nellie came over to inspect the new purchases, and Sir Leigh rode home with her. It was evident to several people he was paying marked attention to her, and she hardly knew what to think of it, or how she felt towards him.

Fred Shirley was not surprised; he thought her a match for any man, and began to have visions of his treasure as Lady Herbert of Bourne Hall.

"Martha, S - Leigh seems very attentive to Nellie," he said.

The Trainer's Treasure

"He is; no wonder at it. She'll be my lady before long; take my word for it."

"It would be a high position," he said.

"She's worthy of it," was Mrs Dent's answer.

Quintin Floyd was very angry at Fred Shirley throwing him over, and obtaining the position of private trainer to Sir Leigh for Max Brandon. He kept his feelings hidden, and soon after Brandon arrived at Bourne he appeared at Meadow Water.

Fred was not particularly pleased to see him, but made the best of it.

"I suppose you heard I sent my horses to Ben Williams?" said Floyd.

"I did hear something about it," said Fred.

"They are there, and I think he'll do a good deal better for me than Brandon."

"I hope you will be more satisfied," said Fred.

"I can't see why you hold such a good opinion of him; your confidence is misplaced. I hope Sir Leigh will not suffer for it."

"I have known Max many years," said Fred, nettled, "and I am sure I can trust him."

"We shall see," said Floyd. He wondered where Nellie was, she had gone to Derby for a few days to some friends.

"Perhaps you will have something good before the season is out?" said Fred.

"I think so; it's about time. I have great hopes of winning a race with Odin."

"I suppose Williams has hardly had time to sum them up yet?" said Fred.

The Man at the Corner

"He has found out Odin is as good as I think him."

"It has always puzzled me why Odin has not shown better form," said Fred.

"I do not think Brandon understood the horse."

Fred smiled; Brandon had pronounced Odin a rogue.

"I am thinking of taking a small place in this country," said Floyd; "I like it, and there is some good sport to be had with the Valley Harriers, I hear."

"A first-rate pack," said Fred, "and Sir Leigh is a capital master."

"I think I'll see him; he has a place to let—Heathrow, I believe."

"I was not aware of it."

"The present tenant is giving it up; he's going south. It is too cold for him."

"It is the first I have heard of it."

"I know it is correct; I had it from an agent in London."

Fred Shirley was not altogether pleased to hear this; Quintin Floyd had not improved on acquaintance.

On his way to Bourne, Floyd called at White House, ostensibly to see Rocket, really to have some conversation with Cissy Bligh. Fate favoured him. Will was out; she received him alone. He made good use of his time. Cissy found him an agreeable companion, entertained

The Trainer's Treasure

him to lunch, showed him Rocket, and walked over part of the farm with him.

Three or four hours went quickly by, and when Quintin Floyd left and rode towards Bourne, he smiled to himself in a confident way.

He had told Cissy of his intention to hunt with the Valley Harriers, and her face betrayed her interest in the announcement. She thought a good deal about him after he left. He seemed to hint that he had decided to take Heathrow in order to be near her; at least he so impressed her.

She saw he admired her; he took no trouble to conceal it, and eligible men were few and far between.

She told Will of his visit, but concealed her feelings from him; he thought she merely took a casual interest in him.

Quintin Floyd called at the Hall and saw Sir Leigh. He explained the object of his visit, and eventually took Heathrow for the hunting season, with the option of leasing it if the place suited him.

"I am glad you are going to hunt in our country," said Sir Leigh; "we require more men of standing. I cannot afford to hunt the hounds entirely at my expense."

"I shall be happy to give a subscription if you will let me know how much you require," said Floyd.

"It is very good of you; I will avail myself of your offer," said Sir Leigh.

The Man at the Corner

"You have engaged Brandon as private trainer?" said Floyd.

"Yes; Mr Shirley recommended him highly."

"I hope he will suit you better than he did me."

"What fault did you find in him?"

"He's not what I call a good trainer, and he was cheeky and impertinent. I strongly objected to the company he kept," said Floyd.

"I am sorry to hear this," said Sir Leigh.

"Mr Shirley said you did not agree, but he never hinted there was anything serious."

"I have no desire to prejudice you against him," said Floyd, "but if you take my advice, you will not allow him to have too much of his own way."

"I will bear in mind what you say," said Sir Leigh.

Quintin Floyd rode to Newton, about six miles distant, where he put up at the Green Dragon Hotel; he had sense to see that he would not be a very welcome guest at Meadow Water.

He had never been at Newton before. It was a neat little town in the hollow, and at night the streets were almost deserted.

It was a delightful moonlight night, and after dinner he went for a walk, taking the road up the hill leading towards Derby. There were seats on the footpath; he sat down, lit a cigar, and enjoyed the moonlight view over the valley. As his eyes roamed over the country his mind went back to Australian days, and lonely nights in the bush,

The Trainer's Treasure

when he and his companion lived a solitary life in the back blocks. They did well, taking one thing with another, until his mate was taken ill, and he sent him to Sydney, where he died.

Died!

Of course he died; although he did not actually see him dead, still, he attended the funeral when Richard Fairthorne was buried. His face clouded as he thought over these scenes. When his mate was taken ill, stricken down with fever, and complications ensued, Sandy Fream helped him to nurse him.

He shivered, although the night was warm, as he thought of Sandy Fream.

Dead!

Of course Sandy Fream was dead! Had it not been reported to him in Sydney that Fream was accidentally shot, and that he died a few days later?

These old themes were not pleasant; he wondered why they came so vividly before him to-night.

He got up, walked farther up the hill, then turned round, retracing his steps towards Newton.

It was close upon ten o'clock when he entered the town and went along High Street to the "Green Dragon." He had been subjected to a few twinges of conscience during the evening when he thought how he neglected his chum Fairthorne in the hospital in Sydney; he might have gone to see him, also he might have attended to him when

The Man at the Corner

he went there instead of leaving it to Sandy Fream. Towards the last, Fairthorne seemed to have taken a dislike to him—why?

He did not answer the question, had no wish to do so; but it irritated him as it constantly revolved in his mind. He was far enough away from Australia, and had no desire to meet anyone from that part of the world.

He entered the hotel, called for something to drink; his walk made him thirsty, beer would quench it best.

He took a long pull at the tankard, then went to the window and looked out. A man stood in the shadow across the road, leaning against the corner of the shop. At first Floyd took no notice of him, but somehow his eyes were repeatedly drawn to the man.

Quintin Floyd was in a nervous state; something had upset him. Why should a man leaning against the corner of a shop at ten o'clock at night, in such an out-of-the-way place as Newton, affect him so strangely?

Again and again Floyd looked at him. His face became white, his lips twitched, his body constantly quivered, and still he stared at the man, fascinated, unable to move. He tried to turn away from the window, but something gripped him, and he could not.

The landlord came into the room, and looked at him in surprise; he thought he had gone to bed.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Did you ring, sir?" he asked, by way of saying something.

No answer.

He thought Mr Floyd seemed quiet; was he ill? Going up to him, he touched him on the arm.

"Is anything the matter, sir, are you unwell?" he asked.

Quintin Floyd started, and half-turned round.

When the landlord saw his livid, haggard face, he staggered back a step or two.

"A glass of brandy, stiff, neat," said Quintin Floyd.

CHAPTER XV

"FANCIED I WAS DEAD"

FLOYD swallowed the brandy at a gulp, it revived him, put false courage into him.

"Thanks," he said to the landlord, "I feel better. A peculiar faintness came over me; it is gone."

He looked furtively at the window.

"You were almost livid," said Dick Bream, who kept the hotel.

"Was I? Liver, I expect."

"More than that," thought Dick; "I wonder what he was staring at out of the window?"

Floyd moved towards the window again and looked out; the man was still standing at the corner, although he had moved away a few steps from the shop.

The light from the hotel lamp shone full on the man's face. Again Floyd shuddered and stepped back into the room. Dick watched him, and said:

"You had better go to bed, sir; I am sure you are not well."

"I will," said Floyd. "Good night," and left the room.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Quite sure you do not want anything?" asked Dick.

Floyd stopped, and said, "Send me up a bottle of old brandy; I fancy it's gulf fever I've got again; I always have two or three attacks in a year."

"I'm sorry," said Dick. "A rest will do you good; I'll bring the brandy up."

When Floyd went upstairs Dick looked out of the window. "I wonder what he saw, or thought he saw," he muttered. He went outside to lock the door leading into the yard, and, seeing the man at the corner, called out:

"Sandy!"

The man came across the road.

"What is it?" he asked.

"How long is it since you returned from Australia?"

"About a twelvemonth."

"As much as that?"

"Yes; why?"

"Oh, nothing; what a chap you are to roam about at night time!"

"I can't sleep indoors, you see; I've been used to camping out, lying in the open, with a blanket round me, and a saddle for a pillow."

"I suppose you came back to see if the old farm was still in your brother's hands?"

"Partly; I heard he was ill, so, as I wanted a trip home, I came."

"He left the property to you?"

" Fancied I was Dead "

" Yes; I wish I had been here when he died."

" Come in and have a drink."

" It's after hours."

Dick laughed as he said, " You are my guest."

They went inside and sat in a little room at the back of the bar.

" Shall you go back again? " asked Dick.

" Possibly; but I have something to do first," said Sandy.

" Business? "

" Yes; a settlement of accounts," said Sandy in a hard voice.

" With a man? "

" Yes."

" Did you ever meet a man named Quintin Floyd in Australia? " asked Dick.

Sandy Fream looked hard at him.

" What do you know of Quintin Floyd? " he asked.

" Not much, but he's going to live in these parts I believe," said Dick.

" Is he? " said Sandy.

" Did you know him? "

" Yes, I worked for him; he was a good sort."

" Should you like to meet him? "

" Very much indeed."

" He's staying here," said Dick.

Sandy Fream almost fell off his chair.

" In this house? " he gasped.

" Yes; he's just gone to bed," said Dick.

" How long is he staying? "

The Trainer's Treasure

" I don't know."

" Perhaps I can see him in the morning? "

" No doubt; I'll tell him you are here."

" No, don't do that; I want to give him a surprise."

" Very well," said Dick.

" I'll be going," said Sandy. " Where does he sleep? "

" Room over the front dining-room."

" Oh! and he's gone to bed? "

" Yes, he had an attack of gulf fever."

" Called it that, did he? "

" Yes."

" It may be so, but I doubt if he even went near the gulf; I've been."

" Queer place, is it not? "

" Rather; the next place to—you know where," said Sandy, as he went out. " I'll come round in the morning; don't tell him I called."

When Quintin Floyd entered his bedroom he again looked out of the window. He saw the man cross the road and evidently enter the hotel. Opening the door he listened, and heard voices.

Cautiously he crept down the stairs in his bare feet; when he could hear what was said he stopped. The conversation between the landlord and Sandy Fream was distinctly audible. Quintin Floyd stole upstairs again, his face haggard, his body twitching. It was Sandy Fream's voice; it was Sandy Fream he recognised standing at the corner, and Sandy Fream was dead, or ought to

"Fancied I was Dead"

be. What did it mean? Had the dead come to life?

He sat on the edge of the bed, planning, scheming; he had need of all his wits. He did not hear the knock on his door until it was repeated. Before he answered Dick Bream opened it quietly and looked in.

"I thought you were asleep, sir," he said; "I've brought the brandy."

"You've been a deuce of a time about it," snapped Quintin.

"A friend popped in; I gave him a drink before I closed up for the night."

"I thought I heard voices," said Floyd.

"Then he must have opened the door," said Dick to himself.

"It's very curious," said Dick.

"What?"

He was about to say his friend was Sandy Fream, and that he had met Floyd in Australia, but checked himself in time.

"I didn't think anyone could hear in this room when we talked in the bar," said Dick.

"I opened the door to see if you were coming with the brandy."

"That accounts for it," said Dick.

"How far is it to Derby?" asked Floyd.

"A dozen miles."

"Is your ostler in bed?"

"Yes."

"Can you call him?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"Yes."

"Then do so. I'm going; I can't sleep or rest with this beastly fever on me. A ride this lovely night will do me good, and I can see a doctor at Derby in the morning."

"I shouldn't go to-night, sir," said Dick, much surprised at this sudden move.

"I must; I cannot rest," said Floyd, pulling on his boots.

"Well, if you must, you must; but it seems queer."

"There's nothing queer about it; can't I do as I wish?" asked Floyd angrily.

"Certainly, sir; I'll call Jacob at once," and Dick left the room.

"It's something to do with Fream; I'm sure of it," thought Dick. "It was the sight of Sandy standing at the corner made him nervous, he got a fright—why, I wonder?"

Jacob grumbled at being roused out of his sleep, and muttered strong language against Floyd. He saddled the horse and brought him into the yard.

Dick Bream was thinking whether it would be better to say anything about Sandy Fream. On the whole he thought not; it was no concern of his.

Quintin Floyd came into the yard, mounted his horse, and gave Jacob half a sovereign, which considerably modified his opinion of him.

"I'm sorry to have put you about," said Floyd

“Fancied I was Dead”

to Dick, who said it didn't matter in the least; he hoped he would have a pleasant ride, and feel no ill effects.

“What did you say the man's name was you were talking to to-night?” asked Floyd.

“I didn't mention his name,” said Dick.

“I thought you did.”

“It's a bit curious, his name's nearly the same as mine—Sandy Fream. I'm Dick Bream.”

“Plenty of Freams and Breams in this part, I dare say.”

“Yes, lots of 'em; it's peculiar to the country.”

“Good night,” said Floyd, as he went out of the yard.

He rode along the Derby road at a fast pace. The exercise revived him, he felt more himself; his brain cleared.

“Sandy Fream,” he thought. “Not dead; that's bad, he may cause trouble. No doubt that's what he's here for. It's man to man, and I have the advantage, the money, position, everything. Still, he may do harm; I must think it out. There may be a way to get rid of him. I wonder if the landlord said anything to him about my being in the house? Probably he did. Sandy Fream had better leave me alone, or it may be dangerous for him.”

Fream's farm was a couple of miles from Newton, and he walked slowly home.

“Quintin Floyd,” he muttered, “and sleeping at the ‘Green Dragon.’ So that's his game; I

The Trainer's Treasure

hardly thought he'd do it, but he has. Fancied I was dead, I suppose. It's not his fault I'm not; it was a narrow squeak. Burgiss confessed when he was almost killed, tree felling; he thought he was going to die, and gave the nice little scheme away. But he didn't die; I've got him here, and he can be produced when wanted—so can someone else. Coming to live in this country is he? So much the better; give a man plenty of rope and he'll hang himself sooner or later."

He reached Brook Farm, and entered the small homestead noiselessly. The only occupant except himself was a man, fast asleep on an old couch.

"Tired of waiting up for me?" said Sandy.

Although he made hardly any noise the man heard him, and was wide awake at once. He had been accustomed to sleep with his ears open, always on the alert.

Sandy sat down at the table and poured out whisky from the bottle, pushing a glass towards his companion.

"Who do you think is staying in Newton at the 'Green Dragon'?" said Sandy.

"Anyone we know?" grinned Ash Burgiss.

"Quintin Floyd," said Sandy.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Ash, as he sank back in his chair, overcome with surprise.

CHAPTER XVI

ROCKET BOLTS

It was December, and no one had seen or heard anything of Quintin Floyd in the county since he rode out of the "Green Dragon" yard.

Several people wondered where he was. Sir Leigh was surprised his tenant had not taken up his residence at Heathrow. Fred Shirley heard nothing of him; he had written to Ben Williams, who had charge of his horses. He answered saying he believed Mr Floyd was on the Continent, but was not sure. Cissy Bligh wondered where he was; she was disappointed, he had not called for several months. Nellie Shirley did not trouble about him; others occupied her attention. She said the world would still go round if Quintin Floyd never turned up. Dick Bream said he expected something had happened. No man in his senses would have ridden away from the "Green Dragon" as he did, in the middle of the night.

Sandy Fream thought a good deal, but talked little. To Ash Burgiss he said:

The Trainer's Treasure

"He'll come back, never fear; we can wait for him, and choose our time."

"Heard from Australia?" asked Ash.

"Yes, last mail."

"Is he still a cripple?"

"Yes, but he's improving."

"That's good," said Ash.

Hunting was in full swing, so was the off season, and Rocket was due to make his first appearance at Nottingham in the Midland Handicap Steeplechase. Will Bligh was to ride his horse, and Sir Leigh was running Freshman in the same race, and proposed riding him.

"I don't think I can beat you, Bligh," he said, "but I'll try. Rocket is a bit too good for me."

"That remains to be seen," said Will, who had every hope of beating Freshman.

Nellie was quite excited over this event, and her father promised to take her to see the race.

She made Will's colours—white jacket and rose sleeves—and very proud he was of them.

It was only a couple of days before the meeting, and Will was giving Rocket a final spin over the jumps. There was no one about that he could see. Rocket fenced splendidly, and his rider thought he had a good chance of winning.

As he neared the big jump, close to the plantation, a gun was fired, without warning, as the horse rose in the air. Rocket was startled, but cleared the leap. The noise, however, made him mad, and, as he landed, he bolted, despite Will's

Rocket Bolts

strenuous efforts to stop him. Rocket had never done this before, but when he bought him he had been given a friendly warning that it was one of his bad habits. There would not have been much danger had there been a clear stretch of level country before him, but the opposite was the case. He made straight for Garth Hill, which was tremendously steep, and in places dangerous.

The horse galloped at a great pace. Will kept a good look out, but it was impossible to steer him. He held the bit firmly, and, do what he would, Will could not wrench it free.

Will did not lose his nerve, he hoped nothing would happen to interfere with the horse's chances for the steeplechase. Rocket swerved to the left, making for Meadow Water. Will's heart beat fast; there was a small gravel pit in this direction. Would Rocket miss it?

Unfortunately, the horse headed for it. The drop was not deep, but there were gorse bushes in front, and Rocket would not be able to see what lay before him. Will stuck to his mount, trying hard to divert his course, but to no purpose. Should he throw himself from Rocket and let him go? It would be risky, but not so bad as the drop into the pit. Before he had time to decide, Rocket was close to the gorse bushes. He rose at them, and then saw what a predicament he was in. Will looked down into the hole as they were in the air.

Crash!

Will knew nothing more; he was thrown from

The Trainer's Treasure

the saddle and stunned. Rocket, strange to say, was unhurt, except for a few scratches. The fall sobered him; he calmed down, looked round wildly for a moment, then galloped up the cart-way to the level ground, and made straight for Meadow Water.

Nellie was in the garden, and saw a riderless horse coming towards her. She recognised Rocket, and gave a quick cry of alarm, which brought her father to the door.

"Look, look!" she cried; "it's Rocket. Something has happened to Will."

Rocket dashed into the yard and was secured.

"No harm done here," said Fred. "We must go and look for Will."

Nellie was as white as a sheet; she trembled, the tears were in her eyes.

"Perhaps Rocket got away from him when he dismounted," said Fred, encouragingly.

She made no answer, and he asked, "Which way did he come?"

She pointed towards the gravel pit, and shuddered.

"It's not likely they would fall in there," said Fred.

Nellie put her shawl over her head and went rapidly up the hill; her father followed with one of the men.

Something told her she would find him in the pit, and she was numbed with fear. Supposing Will was dead? It was a horrible thought; it

Rocket Bolts

almost made her cry out. She had some difficulty in stifling her feelings. So fast had she gone that she was quite out of breath, and had distanced her father and the man.

As she came to the road leading into the pit, she stopped, listening. There was no sound; the stillness frightened her. Could he be in there? She looked down, at first seeing nothing, then caught sight of a man lying on the gravel. Her heart almost stopped beating. Was it Will?

She ran down the slope, reached the bottom, stumbled across to where the man lay, saw it was Will, the blood trickling from his forehead, and, with a cry, flung herself beside him.

"Will. Will," she called; "speak to me, Will."

He lay face upwards. She bent over and kissed him, her tears raining on him. She took his head in her lap and wiped it with her handkerchief.

"Will," she said; "speak to me, Will."

Her voice roused him; the voice he loved best of all to hear.

Slowly he opened his eyes and looked at her, then smiled faintly and closed them again.

"Thank God he's alive," she said, and kissed him again.

A tremor ran through Will's frame. He heard her, felt that delicious kiss, but could not speak or move. Even in his semi-conscious state he knew what she had done, and vowed he would never let her know he knew.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Poor Will, poor Will," she murmured. "I know now; I love you, Will, I do indeed, dear. I love you."

The words penetrated; he heard them. It was wonderful; but he could not move, or show signs of life. What was the matter with him?

Fred Shirley came hurriedly into the pit, knelt down at Will's side, examined him, and shook his head.

"It's a bad fall this, Nellie; he's broken his arm, and I am afraid fractured his ribs, and this is a bad cut on his head. He'll not get about again for some time. I told Jack to bring the float in case it was wanted."

"Is he very bad, Father?" she asked.

"Yes, but I don't think there is any danger unless he is injured internally."

Then turning to the man who came with him, he said, "Go at once for the doctor; we will take him to Meadow Water in the float." When it arrived they lifted him in and took him to the house.

Martha Dent attended to him, and made him comfortable in bed.

Cissy Bligh was sent for. Nellie met her in the hall, her face tear-stained.

"Where is he?" asked Cissy.

"Upstairs; father says he is in no danger."

Cissy gave a sigh of relief, then looked at Nellie, and kissed her. She knew something of what was passing in her mind.

Rocket Bolts

They went upstairs. Will was sensible, and smiled at them. He had regained his speech, but had forgotten what Nellie said in the gravel pit.

"This is a bad job," he groaned. "I think my arm is broken, and my ribs are very sore. Is Rocket caught?"

"Yes," said Nellie; "and he is not hurt."

"And the race is the day after to-morrow, and I shall not be able to ride him," he groaned.

"Never mind about that," said his sister; "be thankful you are alive."

"It must have been a narrow escape," he said.

"Did you find me in the gravel pit?"

"Yes," said Nellie. "You must keep quiet until the doctor comes."

The doctor arrived, set Will's left arm, which was broken, bound up his head, but said no ribs were fractured.

"You must not be moved for a week at least," he said.

"He must stay here until he is well," said Fred cheerfully.

"I will call to-morrow," said the doctor when he left.

Cissy and Nellie went downstairs. There was a strong bond of sympathy between them; they had much to talk about.

Will went to sleep. When he awoke in the afternoon Fred Shirley was there.

"Feel better?" asked Fred.

The Trainer's Treasure

"A lot, but my head aches," said Will. "It's a confounded nuisance about Rocket."

"He's all right. Would you like him to run and take his chance? I will see you have a clever rider up," said Fred.

"It's jolly good of you, Fred. Yes, I should like him to run if possible."

"I will send a note over to Sir Leigh, state what has happened, and ask him to allow Rocket to travel with Freshman. I am sure he will readily agree. You must rest now; doctor's orders, you know," said Fred.

CHAPTER XVII

"HE'S VERY NERVOUS "

"BAD luck," said Sir Leigh, when he received Fred's letter, "but I am glad it is no worse. Rocket can travel with my horse. I'll ride over and see him."

He saw Nellie first, and asked anxiously after Will.

"He is as comfortable as we can expect," she said; "the doctor will not allow him to be removed for some days."

"And are you acting as nurse?" he asked, smiling.

"I do my best in that capacity, and his sister is here," said Nellie calmly.

"He's fortunate," said Sir Leigh; "he is in good hands."

He went up to the room, where Fred Shirley was talking with Will.

"I'm very sorry for this," said Sir Leigh.

"How did it happen? What made Rocket bolt?"

Will explained that the shot in the plantation frightened the horse, and he got out of hand.

"Who fired?" asked Sir Leigh.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I do not know; it may have been Bidgood. He's often about there."

"He had no reason for firing," said Sir Leigh;
"I wonder if he saw you?"

"I should think not," said Fred, "or he would not have done it."

Will had his opinion on this matter, but said nothing; he wondered if Bidgood had been set on to do it by Cresfield.

"I will send Rocket with Freshman," Sir Leigh said. "I wish you were able to ride."

"I think Rocket would have won with Will in the saddle," said Fred.

"Beat Freshman?"

"Yes."

Sir Leigh thought for a few moments, then said, "I have a proposal to make; do not accept it unless you think proper."

"What is it?" asked Will.

"Freshman is not as well as he might be. Max is anxious for him to stay at home. Let me ride Rocket, and I will scratch my horse; but I want a mount in the race."

"That's awfully good of you," said Will.

"Capital," said Fred, "and you'll be on the winner."

"But do you really want to scratch Freshman?" asked Will.

"Yes; you see I save my horse, and have a better mount on Rocket. I only hope I shall be able to do him justice."

“ He’s very Nervous ”

“ I am sure you will,” said Will.

“ I do not think I am as good as you over a steeplechase course.”

“ You’ll do, Sir Leigh,” said Fred; “ you have pluck and judgment. That is what’s wanted.”

“ You’ll wear my colours? ” said Will.

“ Yes.”

“ For the first time. That will bring me luck. Miss Shirley made them,” said Will.

“ Then I shall indeed be proud to wear them,” said Sir Leigh.

“ I am very disappointed,” said Will.

“ The next best thing will be for Rocket to win,” said Fred cheerfully.

Nellie entered the room, and Will said, “ Sir Leigh is to ride Rocket for me, and wear the colours you made. You must go and see the race, you must indeed. I will have no denial.”

“ I am glad I am to have the honour of wearing colours made by you,” said Sir Leigh, looking at her admiringly.

“ I cannot leave you,” she said to Will.

“ You must; Cissy will be here. I do not require two nurses,” he said.

“ We had better go,” said Fred; “ then, we can tell him all about the victory.”

“ You are sanguine of winning,” said Sir Leigh, smiling.

“ More than sanguine. I think it is a good thing with Freshman out of it,” said Fred.

The Trainer's Treasure

It was decided Sir Leigh should send Rocket to Nottingham in charge of Brandon, and that Fred and his daughter should see the race.

Will was grateful to Sir Leigh for what he had done, but a trifle jealous that he should wear the colours Nellie had made for the first time.

"I don't like leaving you," said Nellie, as she came in ready to go.

"I can take care of him," said Cissy, smiling.

"Be sure and tell me all about it when you return," said Will.

"I will take particular notice of everything that happens in the race," she said, "and if Sir Leigh makes any mistakes I shall rate him soundly."

"Poor Sir Leigh," said Cissy.

"He'll deserve it if he does not win," said Nellie.

Rocket arrived safely at the course, Max Brandon in charge. The horse had not got over his fright; he was nervous, and Max doubted whether he would be a safe mount. He explained to Sir Leigh that he would be well advised in putting up a reliable jockey.

"You don't want to run any risks," he said.

Sir Leigh laughed as he said, "I have promised Bligh to ride, and I will."

He was not going to throw away a chance of wearing the colours worked by Nellie Shirley's

"He's very Nervous"

dainty hands. What would she think of him if he gave up the mount?

Max Brandon was anxious; he knew what it was to ride a nervous horse in a steeplechase. He was not surprised at Rocket's condition; a horse that bolted, galloped over a rough country, and finally jumped into a gravel pit a couple of days before was not likely to be at his best.

It was of no use talking to Sir Leigh; his mind was made up. He must try Fred Shirley, ask him to put in a word of warning. He sought him out, and found him with Nellie.

"Well, Max, is all well with the horse?" asked Fred.

"He's very nervous; he's not a safe mount to-day. I tried to persuade Sir Leigh not to ride, but he refuses to give up the mount. I wish you would ask him."

Fred looked at Nellie. She said, "Here he comes; ask him."

"Brandon says Rocket is nervous, and not a safe mount to-day," said Fred.

"So he's been at you," said Sir Leigh, laughing. "He is very anxious about me."

"Perhaps it would be better to put up a good jockey in your place," said Fred. "I am quite sure Will would not wish you to run any risk."

Nellie's eyes were fixed on Sir Leigh; she thought she knew what he would do. He met her gaze and smiled.

The Trainer's Treasure

"I shall ride Rocket," he said, "I would not lose the chance of wearing those colours for anything."

"That settles it," said Fred, "but I shall be glad when it is over."

"So shall I," thought Max.

"I think you will win, and I knew you would ride," said Nellie.

"You think I have courage," he said.

"I know you have."

"I am very proud of wearing your colours," he said.

"Not mine."

"You made them."

"Yes, and chose them; they are pretty."

"Very. I wish you would make a set of my colours."

"Amber, black sleeves and cap?"

"Yes."

"With pleasure, on one condition," said Nellie, smiling.

"Name it."

"That you win on Rocket."

"I will do my best; but don't I deserve some reward anyway?" he asked.

"We shall see," said Nellie.

Rocket was in the paddock. Max kept him in a quiet corner, but the horse was restless, glanced round nervously; despite the cold, he sweated freely.

The lad wiped him down, then Max led him

"He's very Nervous"

round; a novice could see there was something wrong.

"Don't like the look of him," said a man standing near; "a good horse, but seems frightened. I shouldn't care to ride him. I suppose Bligh will be on him. He's a good sort; I hope he won't come to grief."

"And I hope Sir Leigh won't," muttered Max, who overheard the remarks.

Sir Leigh came across and looked at Rocket.

"Is he any better?" he asked.

"No," said Max. "You must let him run his own race, it will make him worse if you bustle him, and be very careful at the jumps. Let him have a wide berth if you can; a knock or a bump would upset him still more."

"I'll be careful," said Sir Leigh; "he's a good chance according to the market."

"What odds are they laying?" asked Max.

"Six to one; he's fourth favourite."

"It's a liberal price. If he were all right he'd have an even-money chance in this lot," said Max.

"Mabel is favourite."

"She's a good mare; a fine jumper. Smith rides; he's a capital horseman. If you follow him you'll be safe."

"I shall want to get ahead of him," laughed Sir Leigh.

"Close on to the finish, not too early in the race," said Max.

"Supposing Rocket rushes to the front?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"Let him stay there, don't pull him back; he can get the course easily. It is only two miles."

Fred Shirley put a "pony" on for Will, and one for himself. Nellie had five pounds on, and Sir Leigh a modest investment.

It was a surprise when Sir Leigh's name appeared as the rider of Rocket. The general opinion was that Freshman had been struck out because Rocket was the better of the pair.

The old stagers, however, backed Mabel, Rivers, and Tonic, because well-known riders were up.

When Rocket was on the track, he commenced playing up, and Sir Leigh had his work cut out to keep him in hand; he was a good horseman, and had a firm will. Rocket soon found this out. It was with some difficulty he persuaded the horse to go down to the post, and Fred Shirley remarked:

"I don't like the look of things; I hope he'll come out of it safely."

"You need have no fear about that," said Nellie; "Rocket will not fall, and Sir Leigh can stick on."

"Will would be upset if he had a nasty spill."

"But he'll not have a spill. I have ridden Rocket; I know what he can do. He's a wonderful jumper," said Nellie.

"So you have; I forgot for the moment. Thank goodness he didn't bolt when you were on him,"

"He's very Nervous"

said Fred, shuddering as he thought what might have happened.

"I wonder who fired the gun?" said Nellie.

"They're off!" exclaimed Fred, neglecting to answer her question.



CHAPTER XVIII

ROCKET'S PERFORMANCE

ROCKET had no intention of being left behind. No sooner was the start effected than he dashed to the front, pulled double, and made the pace strong. Bearing in mind what Brandon said, Sir Leigh let him have his way, although he thought the pace too hot to last.

Rocket cleared the first obstacle in his stride. Sir Leigh knew he had a good jumper under him, but the horse was nervous, over-anxious; the least thing might upset him.

At the end of the first mile Rocket still led, but Smith, on Mabel, seeing how things were going, did not intend being left. The favourite put on a spurt, and ran into second place, followed by First Aid, Tonic, and Rivers; the gap between the leader diminished.

Sir Leigh was sanguine of winning even at this stage; he was glad Nellie's colours would be carried to victory at the first attempt. Rocket was a good horse, no mistake about it.

At the next fence Rocket struck heavily, almost

Rocket's Performance

went on to his knees as he landed. Sir Leigh made a fine recovery.

"If Rocket loses, it will not be his rider's fault," said Fred.

"He rides well," said Nellie, who watched the struggle with the keenest interest.

The hard knock did not improve Rocket's temper. He tried to run out at the next jump. Sir Leigh had a nasty few seconds, when he took it sideways.

Mabel and First Aid were racing at a fast pace, gradually gaining on Rocket, but had not taken his measure yet. Sir Leigh heard them coming, and knew he would have to ride hard. He pressed Rocket forward, but dare not hit him for fear he would shirk it.

There were two more jumps. If he got safely over, there would be a chance of coming in first.

Nellie was growing anxious. She knew how Will had set his heart on Rocket winning his first race, and she wished to tell him how the victory was accomplished.

At the last fence but one she held her breath as she saw Rocket rise at it. He jumped clumsily; she gave a sigh of relief when he was safely going again.

"Will he win?" she asked.

"I hope so, but Mabel is going very well, and she has pace," said Fred.

Sir Leigh felt Rocket labouring a little, and

The Trainer's Treasure

wondered if he would last out after making the whole of the running.

Before reaching the final jump Mabel raced up to him on the right, First Aid on the left, and Tonic was close behind. Rocket was hemmed in; it would be dangerous if he swerved at the leap. There would be an accident if he did.

Sir Leigh kept him straight; he thought it wise to call out: "He swerves badly."

Smith smiled; he knew if he did it would be to the left away from him. He had watched him at the last fence. The rider on First Aid kept his course; he was close to Rocket.

The three horses were level as they rose at the fence. Rocket was inclined to swerve again, but the horse on each side kept him straight, and they landed safely, amidst a roar of cheers from the crowd.

It was a fine finish; a mere question of speed now, and Mabel was generally to be depended upon in the run home.

"I'm afraid he'll be beaten," said Fred.

Nellie was too anxious to answer; her eyes were fixed on the white and rose; the blue and red of the favourite was very close. First Aid was by no means done with.

Sir Leigh had ridden hard in many a good run, but this was a different matter. So far he had not shown brilliant form in the saddle at race-meetings. The thought that Nellie was watching him spurred him on; he was riding better than he had

Rocket's Performance

ever done. It had taken a good deal out of him keeping Rocket in hand, but he was not exhausted.

On the flat Sandy Fream watched the race. He was fond of steeplechasing; had been a rough rider in his time.

"That's him, Sir Leigh Herbert; he owns Heathrow. I wonder when his tenant will turn up. He's ridden a decent race; he deserves to win. It's a rare finish."

Smith tried to shake off Sir Leigh, but could not. Rocket stuck to his work. There was going to be a ding-dong finish.

First Aid was the first to quit, which left Mabel and Rocket to fight it out.

Fred Shirley was almost certain the professional would beat the amateur in a close finish. Nellie pinned her faith to Sir Leigh and the colours. She intended being as nice as she possibly could to him if he won.

At last Sir Leigh raised his whip; it was now or never. They were within a few strides of the judges' box, and Mabel had her head in front.

There were loud cries for the favourite, but before they died away, Sir Leigh so astonished Rocket by the vigour of his onslaught that the horse fairly leaped forward and headed the mare. Nellie could not restrain a shout of joy, and clapped her hands.

Mabel drew level in a final effort, then died away, and Sir Leigh, still riding hard, landed Rocket a winner by three parts of a length.

The Trainer's Treasure

On all sides it was voted a grand race, and even the losers did not complain. Sir Leigh's face was flushed with triumph and exertion. He was delighted at the victory, especially as it had been, as it were, snatched out of the fire. Rocket was a good horse undoubtedly, but had not done his best, and Sir Leigh knew much of the credit of the victory was due to his riding.

After he weighed in, they congratulated him. He went up to Nellie and said:

"It was the thought that I was wearing the colours you made gave me heart. I was afraid at one time Rocket would be beaten; he did not jump as well as usual, and he was nervous."

"You rode a very good race indeed," she said. "You shall have your amber and black jacket as soon as I have made it. I am so glad you won."

"Thanks," he said; "I am always glad to please you—always."

She lowered her eyes under his ardent gaze. She knew what it meant; she might be Lady Herbert and rule at Bourne Hall if she wished, but there was Will, dear old Will, who had nearly broken his neck in the gravel pit, and surprised her into a confession which she did not know he had heard.

"I am glad it is over," said Fred; "I was anxious about you once or twice. I must send a telegram to Meadow Water; he will be anxiously expecting the news."

Rocket's Performance

"Are you returning to-night?" asked Sir Leigh.

"Yes; we must get back," said Fred.

"I shall return to-morrow, and I'll call round in the afternoon," he said, with a meaning glance at Nellie.

"He's fond of my treasure," thought Fred, "and so is Will. I wonder which it will be! I shall not try and influence her."

All the same he recognised it would be a great position for her to reign at Bourne Hall, and take her place in the county.

"Please tell me all about it," said Will excitedly when Nellie came into the room.

"It was a grand race," said Fred.

"Let Nellie tell me; she promised," he said.

She gave him a glowing account of Rocket's performance, and Sir Leigh's riding. She praised him so much that Will felt pangs of jealousy; had he been in the saddle all this would have been for him. What a chance for Sir Leigh; what a lot he had missed by that unfortunate spill!

"I declare you could not have ridden Rocket better yourself," she said. "You must thank him, Will; he won the race. Rocket was not quite up to the mark."

"You praise him enough," said Will.

"He deserves it. What do you think he said?"

"To you?"

"Yes; after the race."

"I don't know," growled Will.

The Trainer's Treasure

"He said the thought that he was wearing a jacket made by me helped him to win," said Nellie.

"Compliments, of course," said Will.

"It was very nice of him," said Nellie, teasing him. "You never pay me compliments."

He nearly blurted out, "I love you too much," but said, "I don't believe in them."

"But we like them."

"Who's we?" said ungrammatical Will.

"Girls, women, my sex generally," said Nellie.

"Even old Amos Berry says I'm the light of the country-side."

"And so you are," said Will quickly. "Old Amos knows what he's talking about."

"Then you endorse it?" said Nellie, laughing.

"Readily."

"Proposed by Amos Berry, seconded by Will Bligh, and carried unanimously," laughed Nellie.

"I promised Sir Leigh something if he won," she added.

"What was it?"

"That I would make him a set of colours."

"Oh," said Will gruffly.

"He was very pleased about it," said his tormentor.

"No doubt."

"I believe he'll ask you to give him the jacket he wore on Rocket."

"He won't get it."

"It is the least you can do after winning for you."

Rocket's Performance

"Is it? Well, I mean to keep that jacket. I suppose he's in love with you."

"Perhaps he is," said Nellie demurely.

"And no doubt you return his affection. He's the lord of the Manor," said Will sarcastically.

"Don't you think it would be rather nice for me to be the lady of the Manor?" asked Nellie saucily.

"I expect that is what will happen," groaned Will.

"Well, it couldn't make any difference to you," she said.

"No, of course not," said Will.

"You would not care a little bit?"

"What's the good," he growled.

"Silly Billy," said Nellie, laughing, as she bounced out of the room.

"Now whatever did she mean by that?" said Will.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TENANT OF HEATHROW

THE hunting season was in full swing. So far it had been fine, open weather, with very little frost, and sport had been up to the average.

Heathrow was still without a master. The servants were there, and all was in readiness for Quintin Floyd's arrival.

In answer to inquiries, very little information was gained from them.

Sir Leigh received a letter from Floyd in which was enclosed a substantial subscription for the Hunt, and an intimation that he would be at Heathrow in a few weeks.

At last he arrived, and he was not alone. He was accompanied by Mrs Floyd, much to the surprise of everybody, and Max Brandon was most surprised of all, when he found the lady was his sister.

She explained to Max that they were married in London, and went on the Continent for the honeymoon, and this was sufficient to account for their absence from Heathrow.

The Tenant of Heathrow

Cissy Bligh was disappointed at the turn things had taken. She had deluded herself with the belief that Quintin Floyd was attracted by her; this was shattered by his marriage.

What was Mrs Floyd like? She was anxious to see her, to know the kind of woman he had chosen.

When Quintin Floyd recognised Sandy Fream at Newton, and rode away in the night to Derby, he was much perturbed and uneasy. He went on to London early, and in the afternoon was at Kingston. He really liked Daisy, and as he felt lonely and depressed, he thought she would console him. She did her best to cheer him, and succeeded.

In the end he became so fond of her that they were married. This was a rash step, he said to himself, but in no other way could he make her his own. Daisy was delighted; she was in love with him. At the same time she knew his faults, and was willing to overlook or make the best of them. On the Continent he was proud of her. She created somewhat of a sensation, for she was handsome, and dressed well and with taste. He liked her to be admired; it flattered his judgment in making her his wife. In Daisy's society he for a time forgot Sandy Fream, but when she asked him if they were to go to England for the hunting season, he became uneasy.

He put off answering her questions from day to day, but they had to be replied to one way or the other.

The Trainer's Treasure

He dreaded meeting Fream, and yet it must be; he might as well face it now as later, and there were ways of dealing with the man.

Daisy lost her temper at last, and insisted upon returning. She was desirous of letting her brother know she was Mrs Floyd, and that she had done a good deal better than he expected.

"I shall begin to think you are afraid to return," she said angrily.

"Don't be ridiculous; why should I be afraid?" he asked.

"I don't know, but it seems so strange you do not wish to get back. You said you had taken a hunting box at—where is it?"

"Heathrow, near Bourne; your brother is private trainer for Sir Leigh Herbert, the owner."

"Is he? That's capital; it will surprise him."

"What?"

"To find out we are married," she said.

"Then you think he did not expect it?"

"He may have given it a thought, but I fancy he summed you up pretty accurately, and doubted whether you were a marrying man."

"He gave me to understand that he thought I knew where you were."

"Which you denied. You're not sorry you married me?"

"No. You're a good sort, Daisy. I think you would stick to a man you loved through thick and thin," he said.

"I'll stick to you, Quintin, if you stick to me,

The Tenant of Heathrow

but there must be no divided allegiance. I must be the only one," she said.

"We're not going to live in Turkey," he said.

"There are pashas in London, as well as in Constantinople," she said; "I don't want you to join their ranks."

"No fear of that," he said, smiling.

They came to London, and in a few days went to Heathrow.

Daisy Floyd was a good rider, and she found in the stables several horses to her liking. She selected two perfect ladies' hunters, after putting them through their paces, and Quintin approved of her choice.

She liked Heathrow; it was a charming residence. She soon formed an exalted idea of her own and her husband's positions.

She sent for Max Brandon, and he came to see her.

"You didn't expect this, eh, Max?" she asked.

"No, I did not; but I am glad you are married."

"You are also glad to discover I am a better woman than you thought?" she said.

"I formed a wrong estimate of your husband," he said.

"I'm not so sure about that, Max; he didn't want to marry me at first."

"How did you manage it?"

"He managed it," she said, laughing.

"How?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"He fell in love with me."

"And you?"

"I like him; he is a very good sort. I'm really fond of him, Max."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, and I hope all will be well with you. He has no liking for me, so I shall not put myself in his way," said Max.

"I never heard him speak ill of you."

"Not since you left my house, you mean," said Max.

Before he left, Max looked at the horses; he saw they were first-class hunters, a cut above the ordinary, and said:

"You'll have some grand gallops; there will be very few in the field to beat you. When do you turn out? There's a meet at Bourne, in front of the Hall, next week."

"We shall be there," said Daisy; "at least I shall."

"Why not Mr Floyd?"

"It seems a strange thing, but he has not shown any desire to go out with the harriers yet," she said.

Quintin Floyd was quieter since his marriage. He called at Meadow Water, and Fred Shirley thought him changed. He met Will Bligh, who was about again, and quite recovered from his accident, and Will thought him much quieter. He told his sister:

"Floyd's an altered man; marriage seems to have tamed him."

The Tenant of Heathrow

"Have you seen his wife?" she asked.

"No; but Fred tells me she is a handsome woman. He has known her a long time."

"Quintin, there's a meet at Bourne Hall next week. I suppose you will be there?" said Daisy.

"What day is it?" he asked.

"Tuesday."

"I shall be engaged; I have to go to London."

"I don't believe it. Why do you avoid the meetings? I want to go."

"There is no reason why you should not," he said.

"But I wish you to be there."

"I must go to town on Tuesday," he said.

"Why?"

"A most important matter requires my attention."

"Tell me what it is?"

"I cannot at present."

"Very well; you go your way, I will go mine. I intend to go to the meet at the Hall. I have no doubt I shall find someone to look after me, give me a lead."

"I am sure you will," he said indifferently.

"Is that all you care about it?"

"Why should I care? You will enjoy yourself."

"You are callous; you don't care about me."

"I do; are we not married?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"That's no criterion."

"In our case it is."

"Then prove you love me, like to please me, and come to the meet," she said.

He hesitated; he had no engagement in London. Why should he not go to the meet? Of what was he afraid?

She saw he wavered, and again urged him to join her and postpone his London visit.

"It looks so strange," she said. "You have taken Heathrow so that you may hunt here, and you do not attend a meet; people will wonder why."

"Very well, I'll go," he said; "but it is to please you."

"And I am pleased, it is very kind of you," she said, smiling.

He left her and went out alone, walking in the direction of Bourne.

His thoughts were not pleasant; he was puzzling out a problem, and it caused him anxiety.

What was Sandy Fream in England for? How had he escaped death? Had not Ash Burgiss distinctly stated that Sandy Fream was dead? Why had he told the lie, or did he believe it true at the time? If Fream came to life in this strange manner, might not—no, he dare not think of that; it was quite bad enough to have Sandy to deal with.

He determined to let things take their course; to wait until Sandy Fream made a move, if he

The Tenant of Heathrow

intended doing so. If he met him he would ignore him.

"He'd better not meddle in my affairs," muttered Quintin; "I'm not likely to give up what I have won. I risked all and came off victorious; possession is nine points of the law. I am more than a match for a dozen Sandy Freams. I wish I could find a man who would do me a great service, someone I could rely upon."

He looked up, and standing near a gate he saw Ralph Bidgood, gun slung on his arm, smoking a pipe. He was dressed as a gamekeeper, and as such Quintin Floyd took him for.

"One of Sir Leigh's keepers," he thought, and was about to pass on with a nod.

"Are you Mr Floyd?" asked Ralph.

"Yes."

"There was a man passed here not half an hour ago asking where you lived," said Ralph.

"Did he give his name?"

"No."

"What was he like?"

Ralph described him.

"Sandy Fream," muttered Quintin. "Which way did he go?" he asked.

Ralph pointed in the opposite direction to Heathrow.

"But my house is not in that direction?" said Quintin.

"I showed him Heathrow in the distance."

"What did he say?"

The Trainer's Treasure

"Oh, that's his place, is it? Well, I'm not going there to-day, but I wanted to know where it was in case I had to call. He gave me a shilling and walked off."

Quintin was studying Ralph; he summed up his character accurately, and thought he might be useful.

"If you see him about again, let me know," said Quintin, handing him a sovereign.

"Yes, sir," said Ralph, touching his cap; "I shall be glad to do anything for you, sir."

"I may ask you to do something some day," said Quintin, as he walked away

CHAPTER XX

THE MEET AT THE HALL

"I'm in luck's way," thought Ralph; "a shilling from one, a sovereign from another in about half an hour. That's better than gamekeeping. Wonder why the old 'un wanted to know where he lived? I wonder why Floyd gave me this sov? He's not flinging it away for nothing."

No inquiries had been made as to who fired the gun that made Rocket bolt, and nearly caused Will Bligh's death. Ralph was glad of this. He felt secure; Will had not seen him, and he could deny he was the offender.

Since the accident Ralph had worried Cresfield for money. Cresfield was mean, miserly, and only gave him the price of a few drinks.

"Here's a man half-killed on your account, and you give me this," said Ralph, disgusted.

"I wish he'd broken his neck," said Cresfield.

"And how much would that have been worth?" asked Ralph.

"Double the amount."

"So that's how I am to be treated? No more dirty work for you, Rufus Cresfield!"

The Trainer's Treasure

"You were a fool to let off the gun when you did. He must know it was you," said Cresfield.

"Perhaps he does. Anyway, if he asks me I'll tell him who put me up to it."

"You'll keep your mouth shut, or you lose your job."

"And who's going to sack me? "

"I am."

"Are you? I fancy Sir Leigh will have a say in it."

"It's no concern of his."

"It will be if I tell him what you have asked me to do."

"You dare not; he'd not believe you."

"Oh yes, he would; he'd as soon take my word as yours."

The upshot of this was that Rufus Cresfield paid Ralph what for him was a large sum.

"Don't forget you've promised to help me with the girl," he said.

Sandy Fream, having found where Floyd lived, walked home to Brook Farm. He intended seizing the first favourable opportunity of having a quiet chat with him.

"I've got some news that will interest him," he thought. "He's a clever one, he is, and he'd have pulled it off all right for a certainty, but I can put a spoke in his wheel, and he'll have to give it up. He'll not like it, oh dear no, but he owes me something. I'd have been dead now if he'd had his way."

The Meet at the Hall

When he arrived at the farm he found Ash Burgess had been helping himself freely to the contents of the bottle. Ash said he did it to drown his remorse at having once attempted to take Sandy's life, a statement that always made Fream smile.

He shook Ash by the shoulder until he became more sensible, then said, "I've seen where Quentin Floyd lives."

"Have you? What sort of a place is it?"

"Looks well from a distance. I intend having a closer look next time."

"You didn't give him a call?"

"No."

"That's as well. He's a dangerous man when he's crossed."

"I'll leave it to you to look him up."

"Not me!" exclaimed Ash.

"Are you afraid?" sneered Sandy.

"Yes, I am."

"You're one of the sort that's brave when a man's back is turned."

Ash shuddered; he knew to what Sandy alluded.

"Listen to me," said Sandy; "I shall want you to help me in this matter when I make a move, and you'll have to do it whether you like or not. You understand?"

"What's the good of dragging me into it?" grumbled Ash.

"That's my business. You will have to help me. There's a meet of the harriers at Bourne Hall, and I'm going to be there."

The Trainer's Treasure

"What'll you ride?" asked Ash, grinning.

"The old horse; he can jump, and he's got a run left in him."

"Cruelty to animals," said Ash.

"It might be if you rode him," was the retort.

There was a large muster for the meet at Bourne Hall. It was a favourite place, and the master of the Valley Harriers was popular with all classes.

Lady Betty was present, a fine figure in her riding habit, haughty and overbearing; snubbing many, speaking to few. The men admired her, but she kept them at a distance. She was a Herbert; they were common clay—and men.

Nellie was there; one of the daintiest little figures imaginable, riding astride, as usual, much to Lady Betty's horror. She told her brother Fred Shirley ought to be ashamed of himself to allow her to go out in those things.

"I think they are very becoming," said Leigh.

"You do not mean you approve of them?"

"Most certainly I do."

"Would you like to see me wear them?" she asked.

He laughed as he said, "I am afraid you are a shade too tall and stout, Betty." He left her and rode up to Nellie, who was with her father. They were talking together when Quintin Floyd and his wife arrived.

Daisy attracted all eyes. She looked handsome, was well mounted, and her habit fitted perfectly. Even Lady Betty deigned to cast eyes upon her.

The Meet at the Hall

Sir Leigh welcomed his tenant, and said he was glad to see him at the meet. He was then introduced to Daisy.

Will Bligh and Cissy came, and were greeted on all sides, the former receiving many congratulations on his escape, also on Rocket's win.

Cissy looked very well. The colour came into her face as Quintin Floyd raised his hat and shook hands.

"Allow me to introduce you to my wife. Daisy, this is Miss Bligh "

Cissy thought she had no reason to feel slighted by his choice. Daisy Floyd was a worthy rival so far as appearances were concerned.

Sir Leigh entertained them hospitably at the Hall before a move was made to the hill.

The Valley Harriers were a noted pack. The country hunted always gave good sport. It was a glorious day, sun shining, air bright and crisp, bringing the colour into the cheeks, making the ears tingle.

Just before they moved off, Sandy Fream rode up on his old horse, once a hunter of some repute, better even than he looked now. Sandy's was not a figure to attract attention; there was nothing out of the common about him. He looked around and saw Quintin Floyd; he pulled his horse close up to him as he rode past with his wife.

Floyd saw him, and his face turned a shade paler, but he rode on without noticing him.

"Wonder if I saw me?" thought Sandy, who was not aware Floyd knew he was in England.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Who is that with Mr Floyd?" he asked.

"His wife. He's not been married long. Fine woman, is she not?"

"Very," said Sandy, adding to himself, "She doesn't know what she's let in for. I'm sorry for her, anyway."

It so happened that Sandy's farm was surrounded by the Herbert estates, and Sir Leigh was anxious to purchase it, as had Sir William, who had made a high bid to Sandy's father, which had been refused, much to the baronet's indignation.

"That's the man occupies Brook Farm, Sir Leigh," said Cresfield, pointing out Sandy.

"Comes from Australia, does he not?"

"Yes, I believe he was out there many years."

"I will take an opportunity of talking to him about the farm. He might be inclined to sell."

"He's more likely to do so than his father."

Rufus Cresfield had eyes for no one but Cissy Bligh. He looked after her wherever she went. He was a fair horseman, well mounted on one of Sir Leigh's horses, and he meant to keep near her in the run.

Will Bligh had a shrewd opinion that Bidgood fired in the plantation at Cresfield's instigation; if he was not present, he put him up to it. He thought the best way of finding out was to keep his thoughts to himself, then Bidgood might let something out.

Moving in the direction of the hill, the sight was picturesque, as seen from the road below in

The Meet at the Hall

the valley, through which the Garth wended its way. They were riding down a slope; before the foot of the hill was reached a hare was expected to be put up. None, however, was found, and the harriers were turned round and bore to the right, ascending the hill on the far side.

Between the hill and Garth Hill there was a deep cutting through which the railway ran, and as a rule a hare went away either to the right or left to avoid it.

About half-way up the hill the harriers were on their hare, and started at a fast pace.

Strange to say, instead of bearing to the right, the hare ran straight, and Sir Leigh wondered how she would avoid the cutting; he had never known a hare run into it and cross the line at this particular point.

Nearly all the field were aware how the land lay, but Quintin Floyd did not, nor, of course, his wife. Considering they were galloping uphill, the pace was hot, and only the best hunters held their own.

Nellie was splendidly mounted; her light weight served her. Sir Leigh saw her ahead and raced after her. The hare still kept a straight course, but he had no doubt before she reached the top a turn would be made; in any case Nellie knew the country, and there would be no danger of her going down into the cutting on to the railway line.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TREASURE SAVES THE PACK

THIS was a remarkable hare, a most perverse "puss," so said the followers of the Valley Harriers for many a long day after. Instead of following the proper course, according to all the canons of sport, and the traditions of the country, she insisted upon taking a straight line for the railway. She possessed unusual speed, even if she was devoid of hare sense, and the harriers ran some distance in her rear, vainly endeavouring to get on terms with her.

The huntsman was riding alongside Sir Leigh, and said, "She'll go into the cutting for a certainty now."

"Is it very steep there?"

"Yes, and dangerous, but a horse might get down; it is possible."

"Look, Miss Shirley is going straight for it!" exclaimed Sir Leigh.

"She knows the country as well as I do; she'll pull up in time," said Jones, the huntsman.

Fred Shirley saw Nellie at the head of the field, but had no fears about her safety. She knew what lay before her, and would avoid it.

The Treasure Saves the Pack

The hare continued on her course, drawing nearer to the edge of the cutting. The harriers were close on her now; she had no chance of swerving to right or left—it meant death.

She reached the top, seemed to halt a second, then disappeared. The harriers went after her without hesitation; the ground was chalky, it crumbled. They would get down safely.

Nellie reached the top; the whole field saw her outlined distinctly. What was she about to do?

A hundred members of the Hunt pulled up almost simultaneously and gazed at her; it was a thrilling moment.

Sir Leigh felt a curious shock, he shivered, for a few seconds he could not speak. Fred Shirley rode up, Will Bligh on his heels, both breathless. They looked at Sir Leigh in amazement, mingled with horror.

"Good God, she'll be over!" exclaimed Fred, aghast, and, spurring his horse, he went up the hill.

This broke the spell; the whole field, headed by Sir Leigh, Will Bligh, Hal Jones, galloped after him.

A cry of horror came from the onlookers as Nellie and her horse disappeared over the edge.

"She must be killed for a certainty!"

"Whatever came over her?"

"It's a terrible thing!"

Such exclamations as these were heard on all sides. Sir Leigh caught Fred Shirley, and they

The Trainer's Treasure

reached the top together. Fred threw himself from his horse and looked over. Sir Leigh followed him, then Will Bligh, the huntsman, and more as they came up. A long row of scarlet coats stood out boldly against the sky-line.

And what did they see? Nellie, the treasure, on her horse in the midst of the harriers who had run with their hare. It was a wonderful sight; still more wonderful how she had gone down the almost straight bank without a mishap.

She waved to them, and when they saw she was unhurt, a terrific shout burst from the people on the top. She was a long way down, and dimly heard it; she acknowledged it with another wave.

She was thoroughly excited. When she arrived at the edge of the bank she hesitated, then determined to attempt what had never been done before. She saw the hare went safely down; the harriers followed without any mishap. Why could not Becky slide down and carry her safely to the bottom? She suddenly remembered pictures she had seen of soldiers and horses sliding down steep inclines during the army manœuvres. If they could do it why not she?

Without any hesitation, Becky went over the edge and commenced the descent. The mare proved clever. She got her hind legs well under her, and slid down, guiding and propping with her forefeet. In a very short time she landed safely at the bottom, close to the harriers with the hare.

The Treasure Saves the Pack

"I'm the only one in at the death," thought Nellie triumphantly; "none of them will venture down the bank."

As the crowd stood watching this thrilling scene in the deep cutting, a sharp, shrill whistle came across the moorland, then a white line of smoke was seen in the distance.

"It's the London train," said Sir Leigh.

"She'll not hear it; the harriers are making too much noise," said Will.

"Follow me," said Sir Leigh, as he made for a cutting where it was easy to go down. The bulk of the field did so, but Will Bligh, flinging his bridle to Fred, said:

"I'll slide down; they'll never be in time to stop the train."

Fred Shirley was too agitated to say much, but jerked out, "God bless you, Will; make haste."

Nellie saw him coming, and wondered why.

Half-way down he yelled, "The train's coming; get out of danger."

She did not hear him. Down he went again, sliding and slipping.

The harriers were quieter, nosing around, trotting in and out under Becky's girth, and between her forelegs.

Nellie looked at Will, who gesticulated frantically, then she saw her father pointing in the same direction, waving her wildly back. A faint, buzzing sound reached her, then a shrill whistle some distance away.

The Trainer's Treasure

She knew now; it was the London train approaching. It came down an incline before reaching the spot, and it would be difficult to pull up.

She rode Becky along the side of the line, the harriers following her. As she went she heard the train coming nearer and nearer. There was ample room for her to pull out of the way, but she was thinking about the pack, the famous Valley Harriers.

She took off her hat, tied her handkerchief to her hunting-crop, and pressed forward.

Unfortunately, there was a long curve in the line, and the train might be on her before she could give a signal to stop.

Will Bligh knew what she was about; he could do no more except slide down on to the line. He too heard the roar of the approaching train, and knew it had entered the cutting.

Becky stumbled along, reached the end of the curve, and Nellie saw the engine panting in front of her, a few hundred yards away. She raised herself in the stirrups, waving her hat in one hand, her hunting-crop with the handkerchief tied on, in the other. The harriers gathered round making music as they saw her.

Would the engine-driver see her signals? was her thoughts.

At last he saw the strange sight on the line in front of him, and managed to pull up within a few yards of the pack, and Nellie on her mare. It was a narrow escape for the harriers; they sniffed

The Treasure Saves the Pack

round the train, little realising what they had been saved from. The passengers, looking out of the windows to see the cause of the stoppage, were surprised at the sight.

"You saved the pack, Miss Shirley," said the engine-driver. "I pulled up in the nick of time; however did you come to be in this cutting?"

"Oh, it's you, Jim!" said Nellie, who knew, and was known by, all the regular men on the line. Thank you for keeping a good look out, and pulling up so promptly; it would have been a pity to lose any of them. I could have got out of the way."

Briefly she explained what happened.

"You came down there!" said Jim, pointing to the heights above.

"Yes; it was easier than I expected."

"I'd never have believed any horse could get down there without you'd told me."

"I'll take the pack past the train, Jim, if you'll wait a few minutes," she said; "I am sure Sir Leigh will not forget you."

She called the harriers, and they followed round her. The passengers cheered her as she rode past. Nellie's face flushed with pleasure as she acknowledged them.

At the end of the train, when the pack was safe, she signalled to the driver to go on, and the train moved away; the danger was averted.

Will Bligh shouted to Fred that they were all safe. He did not hear, but understood from his

The Trainer's Treasure

gesticulations, and a great feeling of relief swept over him.

Meanwhile, Sir Leigh and several others got on to the line, and were coming towards her. The train passed the gap before they reached it, and they were powerless to stop it.

It was a tremendous relief to all when they saw Nellie riding towards them. They cheered, and she smilingly acknowledged it; the old cutting had not rang with such a joyous sound before.

Sir Leigh was the first to shake her hand.

"You gave us a terrible fright," he said. "We thought your mare had slipped over; it was a very risky thing."

"You've no idea how easy it is; try it," she said, smiling.

"Did you hear the train coming?" he asked.

"Yes, when it got into the cutting, and then I thought of the pack. I was in no danger myself; I could have ridden Becky along the side of the line. I wanted to save them, so I rode forward to meet the train, and frantically signalled the driver to stop.

"It was Jim Hurd; he saw us and pulled up just in time. It was a narrow shave. I said I was sure you would not forget him," said Nellie.

"And I shall not, nor you either. You must have some memento of this memorable scene. I'll think it out," said Sir Leigh, smiling. "You saved the pack—Nellie"; he lingered on the last word.

CHAPTER XXII

"I WONDER HOW I CAN MANAGE IT"

SANDY FREAM did not return to Brook Farm after the meet; he rode to Heathrow at the conclusion of the day's run, arriving before Quintin Floyd.

"There's a man waiting to see you," said the groom, as he took the horses. "He's round at the stables."

Floyd asked what kind of man, and gathered from the description who it was.

"Send him into my study," he said, as he entered the house.

"Who is it?" asked Daisy.

"I don't know; someone living in the neighbourhood, no doubt—probably wants work."

Daisy's curiosity was aroused. She halted on her way upstairs, looked down into the hall, and saw Sandy enter the study.

"Curious-looking old fellow," she thought. "I wonder what he wants?"

Quintin Floyd made up his mind quickly. He knew how to act; he had got over the first shock of seeing Sandy.

The Trainer's Treasure

He entered the room, looked Sandy in the face, and asked calmly, without the slightest sign of recognition, "Well, my man, what can I do for you?"

Sandy was somewhat taken aback.

"Pretends he don't know me," he thought; "I'll make him drop that."

"You can do a good deal for me," he said.

"In what way?"

"You know who I am?"

"No."

Sandy laughed as he said, "That won't do, Mr —" he hesitated—Quintin looked hard at him—"Mr Floyd," he drawled.

"Tell me your business, and I will see what I can do for you," said Quintin.

Sandy hardly knew how to begin; he had not anticipated this blunt denial of any knowledge of himself.

"You know me well enough," he said. "I'm Sandy Fream; I worked with you in Australia."

"Did you? I really forget," said Quintin.

"Then let me tell you it will be best for you to remember," said Sandy.

"If you are going to be impertinent I will have you put out."

"That would not be wise," said Sandy. "I can give you a piece of news; I don't know whether it will be welcome to you."

"What is it?"

"He is alive."

" I wonder how I can manage it "

" Who? " asked Quintin coolly, but his blood ran colder.

Sandy laughed as he said, " I hardly know how to call him, as you are Mr Floyd."

" Of course I am Mr Floyd; now tell me who the man is? "

" If you're Mr Floyd, then I suppose he's Mr Fairthorne," said Sandy.

" And who may Mr Fairthorne be, and why do you come to me about him. Where is he? "

" In Sydney, in the hospital, where you left him to die; where you thought he had died and was safely buried. You thought I was dead too, but you were mistaken. I had a narrow escape. Ash Burgiss told me all about it," said Sandy.

" I really do not know what you are talking about," said Quintin Floyd, wishing Sandy was under the sod, as he had thought, until he saw him in Newton.

" It's no use playing this game with me," said Sandy, angrily.

Quintin went towards the door.

" What are you going to do? " asked Sandy.

" See you out of the house."

" I am not going."

" I beg to differ with you," said Quintin, with his hand on the door handle.

" One minute; it will be better for you," said Sandy.

Quintin hesitated. " Go on," he said.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Ash Burgiss lives with me at Brook Farm; he knows Mr—Mr Fairthorne."

Again Floyd's hand grasped the handle to steady himself.

"Where is Brook Farm?" he asked.

Sandy informed him, wondering what his next move would be.

"Sir Leigh Herbert wishes to buy it, does he not?"

"Yes, as his uncle did before him."

"Sell it him."

"Why? I have no desire to part with it."

"In order that you may return to Australia."

"I have no intention of returning at present."

"It will be better for you," said Quintin.

"I don't think so."

"I am sure it will."

"Is this a threat?"

"No; why should I threaten you?"

"Because you wish me out of the way. You'll not get rid of me so easily."

"You say you know me. I repeat I do not know you; are you here to blackmail me if you can?"

"I am here to right a wrong; to demand that you give up what you have taken by false pretences."

Quintin laughed as he said, "Even supposing your absurd story true, how are you going to prove it?"

"I have papers to prove it," said Sandy.

"I wonder how I can manage it"

Quintin Floyd laughed as he said, "Burn them; they are of no use here."

Sandy Fream knew he had a difficult task before him. The man he was trying to serve was a hopeless cripple in the hospital in Sydney; he might die, then where would he be? He was as determined as the man before him; he had his private wrongs to avenge. This man had wilfully tried to do him to death.

"I intend to prove you are an impostor; that you are not Quintin Floyd; that you have no right to the estates; that Quintin Floyd is alive in Sydney; and that you are——"

"Stop!" thundered Quintin, advancing towards him. "Another word, and I'll crush the life out of you."

"I am not afraid of you," said Sandy. "You are not Quintin Floyd; you are Richard Fairthorne. Quintin Floyd is alive in Sydney."

Floyd looked round him; what would have happened is uncertain. The door opened, and Daisy stood in the room.

He glanced at her quickly; had she heard anything?"

Sandy wondered the same thing.

"What is this altercation about?" she asked.

Quintin gave a sigh of relief; she had not heard.

"I was trying to persuade Mr Fream to sell Brook Farm to Sir Leigh Herbert; he wishes to buy it, as it is in the middle of his property. He

The Trainer's Treasure

does not wish to sell, and the argument became heated," said Quintin.

"Oh, is that all?" she said.

"Yes, that's all," answered Sandy, adding to himself, "For the present."

She was not disposed to leave them, and Sandy said, "If you will call at Brook Farm we can talk the matter over again."

"I will call," said Quintin, as he showed Sandy out and rang the bell.

"You were not quarrelling about Brook Farm," said Daisy, when they were alone; "that is an excuse."

He looked quickly up. Did she know, had she heard?

"I thought I'd do Sir Leigh a good turn; he wishes to buy it," said Quintin.

Daisy smiled as she said, "You must think I am a bit of a fool, Quintin. Come, we are man and wife; be candid with me, tell me everything. I will stick to you no matter what happens."

"Nothing will happen," he said, trying to pass it off.

"Why did that man call you Richard Fairthorne and say Quintin Floyd was alive in Sydney?" she asked calmly.

"It was an attempt to blackmail me," he muttered.

"Why not tell the truth, Quintin?" she said, as she put her hand on his arm.

"There is nothing to tell," he said.

"I wonder how I can manage it"

"Do you know that man?"

"No."

She did not believe him; there was some mystery here.

"The fellow is a scoundrel; I shall ask Sir Leigh to do all he can to get him out of the country. He's a blackmailer; one of the worst type," said Quintin.

"Then there is no truth in his statement that Quintin Floyd is alive in Sydney?"

"Of course not; how can you be so absurd."

"Did you know Richard Fairthorne in Australia?"

"Yes; we were on the same station together."

"How long?"

"A considerable time; for some years."

"This man, what is his name?"

"Sandy Fream."

"He must have known this; has he been in Australia?"

"Yes."

"And he did not meet you there?"

"No; why do you cross-question me?" he asked.

"Because I do not think you are telling me the truth," she said.

"Then you believe that blackguard in preference to me?" he asked angrily.

"I want you to tell me everything about your life in Australia, Quintin?"

"I have told you all that is worth knowing."

The Trainer's Treasure

She sighed; it was plain to her he was concealing something.

"Then you deny everything Fream said? You did not know him in Australia?" she asked.

"Have I not told you so?" he answered testily.

She left the room without saying more, and went slowly upstairs.

Daisy Floyd was a clever woman in certain ways. She had much experience of many kinds of men during the time she was with her brother at Newmarket.

She sat down and looked out of the window. In the distance she saw Sandy Fream riding across the moor in the direction of Garth Hill.

"I wonder how much that man knows," she thought; "Quintin is a fool not to trust me. I would help him. I must find out what Fream intends doing. Has Quintin taken another man's place? is he Richard Fairthorne? If so, there must be some remarkable resemblance between them. If he is not Quintin Floyd, where do I stand? He has in that case married me under a false name. I don't think it is as bad as that; I believe he is Quintin Floyd, but I am certain Fream knows something and thinks he can turn it to account. It would be far better for Quintin to tell me; if he still refuses, I must find out myself, and that means seeing Sandy Fream privately. I wonder how I can manage it?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ATTACK IN THE PLANTATION

NEILLIE SHIRLEY'S exploit at the railway cutting, and how she saved the Valley Harriers from destruction, was chronicled in the papers. Her portrait appeared; she was the heroine of the hour in sporting circles. She was amused at the fuss made over her. She laughed at her father's expostulations about the risk she had run; she chaffed Will Bligh about his efforts on her behalf, and she told Sir Leigh if he wished to reward her he ought to have her picture painted on Becky surrounded by the harriers, in the cutting.

"And so I will," he replied; "it will look quite heroic on the walls of the Academy, and a description of the daring adventure can be given away to all comers."

As she wandered about the country-side, or went long rides on Becky or Twig, she often wondered if Will Bligh had heard her words of love when he seemed wellnigh insensible in the gravel pit. She hoped not; it would be a complete surrender, and she had no desire to give in to any man.

Sir Leigh had asked her to be his wife, and she

The Trainer's Treasure

declined, although she had not told her father. She gave him to understand that although she was very fond of him as a friend, she did not love him, and that, tempting as his offer was, she must refuse.

Sir Leigh took the refusal well, and continued on good terms with her. He was not at all down-hearted. If he could not secure Nellie, there were others, and it was not long before he paid attention to Cissy Bligh, at which Nellie laughed and told him his fancy for herself must have been a passing whim. He assured her it was nothing of the kind, but her answer was so emphatic that he gave up hope of joining her, and looked elsewhere for consolation.

Cissy Bligh was flattered at Sir Leigh's preference for her society, and Will wondered if it would come to anything; at any rate he was glad Sir Leigh had given up all thoughts of Nellie. It left the coast clear, but so far he dare not take advantage of it.

Nellie and Cissy often went rambles together. It was the middle of January, and the days had not lengthened much. They were returning from a long walk, and Nellie left Cissy at the end of the plantation, taking the nearest way home.

Cissy entered the plantation, walking along the almost disused path. It so happened that Cresfield and Ralph Bidgood were there. When they saw her coming they hid in the shade of some bushes.

Her appearance was so unexpected that Cresfield

The Attack in the Plantation

had no time to think what should be done. Here she was in his power, and the sight of her set his blood on fire. As usual, of late, he had been drinking, and Bidgood, too, had taken more than was good for him.

"What are you up to?" asked Ralph, as he watched Cresfield's face working.

"Wait and you'll see; I reckon on you helping me."

"So long as she comes to no harm," said Ralph.

It was growing dark as Cissy came along. The trees around cast shadows; she saw nothing of the hidden men. She stepped briskly, and was about to pass the bushes when Cresfield came swiftly behind her, passed a handkerchief over her face, and drew her backwards. Ralph caught her by the hands and held her fast, while Cresfield made the gag tighter.

Cissy struggled, but could do nothing against two powerful men. She could not see, and the handkerchief almost choked her. As she struggled she struck the back of her head against a tree. It stunned her; she was helpless in their hands.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Ralph. "We're in a pretty mess for nothing."

"She's mine," said Cresfield; "I'll take her home."

"You are mad, man," said Ralph; "she'll never stay with you."

"She'll have to, once I get her there; she'll

The Trainer's Treasure

never have the face to leave after she's been in my house all night. Go and fetch my trap; I'll stay here."

Ralph Bidgood hesitated; his brain was clearer. She had never done him any harm, he would not leave her in Cresfield's power; he knew him too well.

"Are you going?" asked Cresfield.

"No."

"If you don't I'll make it hot for you."

"I am not going to leave her alone in your hands."

"You helped me to get her down."

"I have changed my mind. Let her go; stand up."

"Not me; she's mine."

Cissy showed signs of reviving, and Cresfield held her in his arms. The handkerchief had been removed so that she could breathe freely. She heard someone say:

"Hands off her, or I'll make you."

This gave her hope. She knew her assailant was Cresfield. She dreaded being alone with him in the plantation.

"Help me, help me!" said Cissy in a half-stifled voice.

"You're mine; I'm going to take you home," said Cresfield.

"Let me go," she said, struggling.

"Not likely, after the trouble I've had to get you. You'll stay at my house to-night."

The Attack in the Plantation

"Damn you, get up," said Ralph, who was sick of the whole business, as he pulled Cresfield back.

Cissy felt weak and dizzy, but scrambled to her feet.

"Who is it?" she said.

"Me—Ralph Bidgood." *

"I shall not forget the service you have rendered me, nor will my brother," she said, as she hurried away.

Cresfield writhed and twisted like a madman, but Ralph was too strong for him. The wretched man screamed in his rage, and tried to bite his captor.

"Stop that," growled Ralph, "or I'll knock you silly."

Cresfield began to whine like a whipped dog. He was thinking what would be the end of this. What a fool he had been to risk so much for nothing. Sir Leigh would be sure to hear of it, and he would get short shrift. He cursed Cissy, and Ralph, as he tried again to wriggle free.

"Let go; I'll be quiet. She's gone," he gasped.

This was true. She was out of harm's way, so Ralph relaxed his grasp.

No sooner was he free than Cresfield picked up a thick piece of broken branch, and brought it down full force on Bidgood's head; he dropped like a log. Cresfield crept out of the plantation and went home. He was in a desperate mood, and, as ill-luck would have it, he met Quintin Floyd, who had been in Bourne.

The Trainer's Treasure

The moon had risen, and Cresfield recognised him. Floyd knew something of Cresfield's character, and he was desperate. He had forgotten about Ralph Bidgood and the sovereign he gave him. Here seemed a man ready to his hand. Something prompted Floyd to dismount and look close into Cresfield's face.

"What have you been up to?" he asked.

"What's that to you, Mr Floyd?" said Cresfield sulkily.

"You look desperate, as though you'd had a fight or a struggle."

"And supposing I have?"

He had heard Cresfield was a miser, that he would do anything for money. The thought occurred to him now.

"Would you like to earn five hundred pounds?" he asked eagerly.

It was a risky move, but he made no mistake in his man, and he caught him at the right moment.

Cresfield clutched him by the arm.

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes," said Floyd, looking round. "Come off the road, in here."

They went into a barn in the field close by, Floyd taking his horse with him.

For some time he whispered to Cresfield, and as he listened his flesh almost crept, and his hair stood on end. What awful scheme was this he listened to; was he asleep or awake?

"Do this and I will give you five hundred

The Attack in the Plantation

pounds. If the men are missing, you shall have a thousand," said Floyd.

Cresfield thought of all that would happen when his conduct to Cissy Bligh was discovered. He would be cast out, and no one would pity him. This was his best chance; how strange it should have been put to him to-night.

"I'll do it," he said, shivering; "where's the money?"

"Here," said Floyd. "Five one hundred pound notes."

He had been to the bank during the day, and happened to have them on him.

"You'll do it to-night?"

"Yes," said Cresfield, shuddering; "and shall I get another thousand if—if they are missing?"

"Yes, yes, I'll make it another thousand," said Floyd hurriedly.

"Let me see if the coast's clear," said Cresfield, looking out. He drew back suddenly. In the distance he saw Ralph Bidgood going towards the village.

"Who is it?" asked Floyd.

"Bidgood."

Floyd started. He remembered now he had given him a sovereign and asked him if he would help him at any time he might need his services.

When they parted, Cresfield did not go to Bourne. He struck across country at the rear of White House Farm.

The Trainer's Treasure

Quintin Floyd arrived at Heathrow late. Daisy asked where he had been.

"To Bourne. Sir Leigh asked me in, and I stayed for tea."

She looked at him suspiciously. He seemed excited; she had doubted him of late, ever since the interview with Sandy Fream.

"Quintin, why don't you tell me what is troubling you?" she asked kindly.

"Haven't I told you repeatedly that nothing worries me," he said. "Why do you keep harping on the same question? It irritates me."

"I don't think I irritate you," she said.

"No."

"It is your conscience," she said quietly

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRAGEDY OF THE FARM

SANDY FREAM hardly knew how to act; he feared Quintin Floyd, although he concealed his feelings from Ash Burgiss. He waited for Floyd to call, but he did not come. As the days passed, he became uneasy; he drank heavily with Ash, who was only too willing to help him.

The night Floyd met Cresfield the two men at Brook Farm had been at their potatoes longer than usual; they staggered upstairs to bed, and were soon in a deep, deadened slumber.

They did not hear a crackling sound as the fire spread through the old house with its dry, half-rotten timbers. They snored on, heedless of danger. The flames could have been seen some distance away, but as the house stood in a hollow, and there were few habitations near, no neighbours saw the glow in the night.

One man, however, saw it. He stood looking on at his handiwork from a safe distance; the burning homestead fascinated him, he could not take his eyes off it. There were two men in the

The Trainer's Treasure

house; he had seen their shadows as they went upstairs.

The flames reached the top rooms, weaving a flickering light in and out, round about the house, like a fiery serpent; the hollow was lit up with the glare. Rufus Cresfield shuddered with fear, wondering if anyone would come and find him crouching there. A dull roar reached his ears; a slight wind fanned the flames, they were licking the roof now.

He rubbed his hands and muttered, "I'll get that thousand; they are both inside. There's no chance for them."

The forked tongues of flame darted in and out of the windows, and the crackling increased, still no one appeared.

The roof fell in with a crash, a cloud of black smoke rose from the house, and two terrible cries pierced the air; again they were repeated, and Cresfield stopped his ears.

He looked at the smouldering ruin, half-expecting to see two charred figures rise from the midst. For the first time he began to realise what he had done: he had set fire to the house and burned the men. His dulled senses cleared, and he saw his crime in all its hideousness. Guilt was stamped on every feature; he trembled, writhed, as though in the clutch of some horrible phantom. The terrible shrieks rang in his ears; he felt they would be there until his dying day. Why had he done this fearful thing?—to reap his reward. He

The Tragedy of the Farm

felt the five notes in his breast pocket to see if they were safe. He was to have another thousand if the men did not come out alive.

There was no fear of this now; the bare sides of the house were alone standing, the rest was a blackened mass. Somewhere in the midst of it were two men, burned to a cinder.

Gradually he crept nearer to the place; he wished to make sure of his victims. The heat was intense, but he did not seem to feel it; he peered into the smoking mass, but saw nothing. No human being could be in there and live; he was sure of that.

A demon seemed to possess him, and he capered around the ruins like a madman. No one had seen him; he was safe. He must make his way to Heathrow, draw the thousand pounds, and clear out.

He turned his back on the walls, and was about to walk away when he heard a crash. A wooden beam had fallen; a shower of sparks shot up into the air, then a light flamed, illuminating the hollow again.

Cresfield looked. What was that black thing standing up in the middle of the pile of debris. His eyes started out of his head, for the thing seemed real, and assumed human shape. He tried to shriek, and could not; he gasped for breath, then fell forward on his face, arms outstretched, hands clutching the grass. It was only a charred support he had seen standing in the ruined room,

The Trainer's Treasure

but to his guilty eyes it assumed the proportions of a blackened human being

When Rufus Cresfield looked out of the barn and saw Ralph Bidgood, he stepped back, fancying he had been unobserved; he was wrong—Ralph had seen him.

"Hallo! what's he doing there?" he thought.

His head ached from the effects of the blow, and when he saw Cresfield, a desire seized him to pay him back. He would give him as good as he gave, and then cease to have anything to do with him.

Much to his surprise, he saw Quentin Floyd and his horse come out of the barn after Cresfield.

"What does he want with him?" thought Bidgood, and watched Floyd ride away.

Then a dizzy feeling came over him. He had a hazy notion of seeing Cresfield sneak along at the rear of White House, then the drowsiness overpowered him, and he slept.

How long he slept he did not know, but when he came to himself, the first thing clear to him was Rufus Cresfield stealing along at the back of White House Farm.

He got up and staggered along in that direction, wondering where Cresfield had gone. It occurred to him he might have walked to Newton; perhaps Mr Floyd had asked him to do something for him there. As he went on, Ralph became stronger, and the pain in his head lessened. There was,

The Tragedy of the Farm

however, a lump to remind him of Cresfield's cowardly blow. He rubbed it, and the mere feel of it further incensed him against his assailant.

When Ralph had proceeded some distance, he saw a faint glow, which gradually increased.

"Something on fire," he thought. "Seems to be in the direction of Brook Farm; perhaps the old boozers have set the place on fire."

He hurried on, and arrived on the scene in time to see Rufus Cresfield fall to the ground, overcome with fright at his imaginings.

"What's he doing here?" thought Ralph, who walked up to him and pulled him over on to his back. Cresfield lay still, his eyes wide open, dilated with horror. He had every appearance of a man who had been strangled: his throat was swollen, his tongue out; he looked dreadful. Even Ralph stepped back, looking at him horrified. Was the man dead?

Ralph shook him, tore off his collar and tie, opened his waistcoat, and felt his heart; there was no beating. He had distinctly seen Cresfield fall down, face forwards. He must have been overcome with a sudden deadly fit.

"He's dead right enough," said Ralph, and felt but little compassion for him.

"What was he doing here?" It never occurred to Ralph that Cresfield had set the house on fire. As he looked at the dead man—for Cresfield was dead—he saw something white peeping out of the inner pocket of his coat. Stooping down, he took

The Trainer's Treasure

out the papers, examined them, and gave an exclamation of surprise. There were five notes, each for one hundred pounds. Where had Cresfield got them? Ralph knew he had not been to Bourne, he also knew he had seen Quintin Floyd come out of the barn with Cresfield. He surmised Floyd must have given Cresfield the notes, but for what purpose? The facts were plain. Cresfield was dead, Brook Farm House was burned; probably Sandy Fream had perished in the flames. Had these facts any connection with the five hundred pounds Quintin must have given Cresfield?

Thus pondered Ralph Bidgood as he handled the crisp notes. Having possessed himself of these facts, Ralph argued that no one would know Cresfield had this money on him, except Floyd, and he would not be likely to make inquiries about the notes.

"They're no use to him," said Ralph, looking at Cresfield; "they'll be handy for me. I can change 'em one at a time at Derby, and no questions will be asked."

Should he leave Cresfield's body where it was, and let the mystery of the fire and of his death be solved by the police, if they could? That would be the best way.

Ralph lingered about the place, fascinated by the air of mystery surrounding the ruins. He peered inside, as Rufus Cresfield had done, but saw no signs of bodies; no doubt they would be

The Tragedy of the Farm

found when a search was made. He had better clear out at once and go home to Bourne.

With this intention he set out, the notes in his pocket; he did not touch Cresfield's body again.

When Ralph arrived home, Mrs Tapper was busy preparing breakfast. She looked up as he entered, noticed his battered condition, the lump on his head, and asked where he had been, how he came to be in that plight?

"I've had a tussle with a couple of poachers," said Ralph. "They got away from me. I couldn't handle the two. One of 'em hit me a fine whack over the head with a stick."

This seemed plausible. She knew rough poachers came from Newton and elsewhere.

He pulled off his coat and flung it on the back of a chair, then went out to the back to wash.

Mrs Tapper picked up the coat to hang it on a hook. As she took it up by the sleeve, some papers fell on the floor. She picked them up, and was about to replace them, when she caught sight of the figures, £100. She hastily looked at the others—five hundred pounds. She gasped for breath; where had he got them? She pushed them into the pocket again, and hung up the coat.

She had noticed his condition when he came in. His explanation did not seem so plausible now she had seen the notes.

Bad as he had been, she did not believe he would commit a robbery, and yet where did the notes come from?

The Trainer's Treasure

Ralph Bidgood remained at home all day, nor did he seem inclined to turn out next morning. Then the news came to Bourne that Brook Farm House had been burned to the ground; the bodies of Sandy Fream and Ash Burgiss were found in the ruins, and, strangest of all, Rufus Cresfield was found dead not far away from the house, and from his face and neck, there was every indication that he had been strangled. The police were making acting inquiries, but the whole affair was wrapped in mystery, which the finding of Cresfield's body intensified..

"Do you know anything about this?" asked Mrs Tapper, when she heard the news.

"Me!" exclaimed Ralph. "Good Lord, no! How should I know anything about it?"

She still wondered how he came by the five one hundred pound notes.

CHAPTER XXV

ARRESTED

AMOS BERRY, general purveyor of news, brought the information that Brook Farm, and its inhabitants, had been burned, and that Rufus Cresfield was found dead not many yards away. He delivered this budget at Meadow House, also at White House, and then tramped to Heathrow.

Mrs Floyd saw him, and, being anxious to have her letters, she opened the door, took them, glanced at the writing, and was disappointed. They were of no importance.

Then Amos related his news for the sixth time that morning. At each attempt the story lost nothing in the telling.

" Brook Farm—who lives there? " she asked.

" Sandy Fream and Ash Burgiss. Maybe they went to bed and set the place on fire with the candle; they were a feckless pair."

She remembered Sandy Fream was the name of the man who came to see Quintin, the man who had been in Australia.

" Did you say Rufus Cresfield was found dead near the house? " she asked.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Yes, that's the curious part of it," said Amos.
"What was he a-doing there, and how be it he came by his death? They do say as how he was throttled."

"Murdered?" she said.

"Suppose it amounts to that; there'll be the deuce to pay when Sir Leigh sets to work."

She sent Amos round to get his usual pint, and went inside.

"Have you heard the news, Quintin?" she asked.

"No, what is it; some of old Amos' gossip?" he asked with a startled expression on his face.

"Brook Farm House was burned out last night; Sandy Fream and another man were in it," she said.

"How horrible," he answered; "both dead, did you say?"

"Yes. Rufus Cresfield was also found dead not far from the house. Amos says he was strangled—throttled, he called it—murdered!"

Quintin looked at her in a dazed way. Had he heard aright? Cresfield dead, murdered! By whom, and for what? He understood only too well how Sandy Fream had come by his death, but could not imagine Cresfield being dead too.

"I wonder what Cresfield was doing there?" she said.

He made no answer. He sat staring into the fire.

Arrested

"I suppose the police will find out all about it," she said. "You will go to Manchester to see Rocket and Freshman run?"

"No, I shall not go," he said abruptly.

"But you said you would take me."

"I have changed my mind; I cannot go."

"This news seems to have upset you; perhaps it is Fream's sudden death, after being here only a few days ago?"

"I am not sorry for Fream," he said.

"I should have thought you would have been sorry for any man who was burned to death."

"Of course. Yes, I am, but Fream was a blackguard."

"You have no objection to my going to Manchester?" she said.

"No."

"I will go with Nellie Shirley if she will have me. I'll ride over and ask her."

"When are the races?"

"On Monday."

"Oh, very well," he said, and turned to some papers on his desk.

Daisy's thoughts were not pleasant as she rode to Meadow Water. Nellie welcomed her. She rather liked Mrs Floyd, what little she had seen of her.

"I am here as a suppliant," she said. "I want you to do me a good turn."

"What is it I can do for you?" asked Nellie.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Take me to Manchester races; my husband has thrown me over, he won't go," said Daisy.

"You can come with us with pleasure," said Nellie. "My father is going, and Cissy Bligh; Sir Leigh and Mr Bligh have already gone."

"Then they have not heard about that terrible fire at Brook Farm?"

"Yes; Amos of course told them. It is a fearful thing; the most extraordinary part of the affair is the finding of Rufus Cresfield's body. What was he doing there?"

Cissy Bligh had not told her brother or anyone else about the attack on her in the plantation. She was glad of this when she heard about the fire and the finding of Cresfield. He was dead, had paid a terrible penalty, and she had no desire to blacken his memory.

"The police will find out the mystery," said Daisy.

"I hope so, because we have heard the house must have been set on fire."

Daisy looked quickly at her. "You heard that?" she said.

"Yes, from one of our men who went into Newton; he had it from Sergeant Smith, who has the matter in hand."

"If it is so the man who set it on fire must have known Fream was inside," said Daisy.

"Possibly," said Nellie. "It is a very strange affair. Sir Leigh is sure to do all he can to discover who killed Cresfield."

Arrested

"Not a very nice man, was he?" asked Daisy.

"No, the opposite; but, all the same, Sir Leigh will want to know how he came by his death," said Nellie.

Daisy rode back to Heathrow and found Quintin had gone out. She was restless and ill at ease; a feeling of impending disaster hung over her.

The same night there was much excitement in the village of Bourne. Sergeant Smith rode in about nine o'clock. He put up his horse at the "Herbert Arms," went round to the local constable, Sam Potts, and had a long chat with him.

Potts lived in a neat cottage, and took a pride in his garden. He generally secured a good many prizes at the local Flower Show. Sergeant Smith liked Potts; at the same time he had an idea the Bourne constable was much too lenient with the young scamps of the village.

Potts had heard all about the Brook Farm mystery, and reckoned it up in his own way.

He explained what that way was to the sergeant.

"Both of 'em were probably drunk, and set the place on fire," he said.

"But how do you account for Cresfield being found there?" asked Smith.

"He's often out late; he may have seen the blaze. He may have run there as fast as he could, and he may have fallen down dead from

The Trainer's Treasure

apoplexy when he arrived there," said Potts solemnly.

"Not a bit of it; anyone can see he was strangled. It's a clear case of murder, but I can't make out what he was doing there."

"You've seen the body, and I've not," said Potts. "You are in a better position to judge."

"I'm on the scent," said Smith.

"You ain't!" exclaimed Potts.

Smith nodded.

"You know Jamie Sands?" he asked.

"That half-witted chap? He's always prowling about the woods, sleeping in barns, and so on."

"He may be half-witted, but he's cute."

"Well?"

"He was out this morning early. He saw the smoke coming from Brook Farm and went there."

"Well?" exclaimed Potts, growing interested.

"He saw a man searching Cresfield's pockets."

"No!"

"Who do you think the man was?"

"Did he recognise him?"

"Yes."

"Who was it?"

"Ralph Bidgood."

"Good God!" exclaimed Potts; then added: "Is he certain?"

"I think so, but he went to look at Cresfield after Bidgood left, and the sight of the dead man's

Arrested

horrible face frightened what little wits he has out of him. He hasn't got over it yet."

"What are you going to do?"

"Go to Bidgood's."

"Apprehend him?"

"If necessary. You must come with me."

Potts had a weak spot in his constitution for Mrs Tapper. He had no wish to offend her.

"I don't suppose he'll be at home now."

"We'll see anyway."

"You go inside first; he may be able to explain," said Potts.

"It will have to be a very good explanation that satisfies me," said Smith. "Come along!"

They went out, Potts unwillingly, and proceeded to Mrs Tapper's cottage.

Smith knocked at the door. When she opened it and saw who it was, she fell back frightened; her face turned white.

"She knows something," thought Smith.

"Is Bidgood in?" he asked.

"No," she said.

"Where is he?"

"Out on his beat. He's one of Sir Leigh's keepers."

"I know that. Where was he yesterday?"

"Out as usual."

"What time did he come home?"

"For breakfast."

"Then he was out all night?"

"He mostly is."

The Trainer's Treasure

"I must see him. Where do you think I shall find him?"

"I really don't know."

It so happened that Ralph came into Bourne about a quarter to ten and went to the "Herbert Arms."

Sergeant Smith, returning for his horse, found him. He beckoned him out into the yard.

"I'm sorry, Bidgood," he said, "but I must arrest you on suspicion of being concerned in the murder of Rufus Cresfield."

"Murdered! He wasn't murdered!" exclaimed Ralph.

"How do you know?" asked Smith quickly.

"Because I was there when he fell down dead. I saw him fall."

Sergeant Smith smiled. "A likely story that," he thought.

"You need not answer my questions unless you like. I shall make use of your answers."

"Fire away, I'm not afraid," said Ralph.

"What were you doing there?" asked Smith.

"I saw the light from the fire, so I went in that direction," said Ralph.

"What did you see when you got there?"

"Cresfield was standing straight up; then all of a sudden he fell forward on his face."

"What did you do?"

"I went up to him and pulled him over; then I saw he was dead,"

"Anything else?"

Arrested

Ralph hesitated, then said: "No, nothing else." He was not going to tell Smith about the notes; not likely.

"I am sorry, but I shall have to arrest you," said Smith. "You'll come quietly with Potts?"

"Oh yes," said Ralph carelessly.

CHAPTER XXVI

ROCKET WITH WILL UP

NONE of the Bourne party at Manchester had heard of Bidgood's arrest, but the chief topic of conversation was the fire at Brook Farm, and the death of Cresfield. Sir Leigh expressed his determination to have the mystery solved.

Freshman was running in the opening event, the Ellesmere Hurdle Race, and Rocket was in the last race, the Pendleton Chase; both horses were expected to win.

Freshman, ridden by Sir Leigh, had no difficulty in beating the half-dozen horses opposed to him. The sport was tame until the last race came on. There were eight runners and of this lot Rocket, on the strength of his Nottingham win, was favourite. Although Will Bligh had recovered from his fall, his arm was not strong, and as Rocket required a good deal of holding, Fred Shirley suggested Sir Leigh should have the mount again. To this Will objected. He wished to ride and wear the colours Nellie had made, also to win in her presence.

Rocket with Will up

"I'm afraid it will be risky," said Fred.
"What do you think, Nellie?"

"If Will says he is fit to ride, I think he is right in doing so," she replied.

Daisy Floyd had won money on Freshman, and put it all on Rocket at two to one, standing to win a fair stake.

Nellie was anxious to see Will win; she thought him a better rider than Sir Leigh. The distance was two miles, and the horses were considered a fairly even lot.

Medway ran Rocket close in the betting; Worsted, Valet, Tonic, and Carey were all well backed.

"If you take my advice you will let Rocket run his own race," said Sir Leigh.

"Perhaps the race will be fast; if so, I'll keep him back a bit," said Will.

Medway went off with the lead, and set a merry pace. He held command by a dozen lengths at the end of the first mile and looked like going on.

Will thought this too risky; he had a lot of ground to make up. He sent Rocket forward and was delighted to find how quickly he gained ground. Valet and Tonic were almost level with him; at the next fence they rose simultaneously, the white jacket and rose sleeves in the middle.

Tonic swerved and bumped Rocket, who cannoned on to Valet. It was an awkward moment. Tonic fell; Will pulled Rocket to the left to avoid him, and just missed Valet. Rocket

The Trainer's Treasure

stumbled on to his knees; Will made a great effort, righted him, and got going again. He felt a wrench at his arm; it was useless. He must use one hand; he wished he had let Sir Leigh have the mount. Valet made use of his advantage and galloped in pursuit of Medway. The race seemed to lie between the pair.

"Will's hurt his arm," said Fred, looking through his glasses.

"He's probably fractured it again," said Sir Leigh. "I feared this might happen."

Although Will was in great pain he stuck to his work. Rocket had much ground to make up, but there was no need to despair; he had plenty of pace.

As he crept up to the leaders, Will's excitement increased. He forgot the racking pain in his arm. There were three jumps before the finish on the flat. Rocket had a clear course at the first and went over easily; at the second, Valet struck heavily, and almost came down. His jockey made a clever recovery and he went on, losing several lengths. Rocket took a tremendous leap, landing several feet to the good. A cheer greeted this feat; it was deserved. Before the last obstacle was reached Rocket ran up to Valet, passed him, and took off too soon. Will recognised the mistake, and tried to lift him over the fence, using both hands. Rocket pulled hard as he landed and again an excruciating pain shot through Will's arm and ran down his side. He almost cried out; it made

Rocket with Will up

him feel faint. He reeled in the saddle; for a moment it seemed as though he would fall, but with a great effort he shook off the faintness and rode on.

Nellie saw him sway and caught her breath; she put out her hands, forgetting she could not assist him. Cissy noticed the movement, so did Mrs Floyd. They smiled, divining what it meant. Her face showed her anxiety; Sir Leigh felt a pang of jealousy as he watched her, then shook it off and said:

"He's all right, but I expect his arm gives him great pain. I fancy Rocket will just do it."

Nellie gave him a grateful glance as she said: "I hope so."

Medway was not beaten, and loud cries proclaimed he was winning.

"Rocket! Rocket!" shouted the backers of the favourite as Will's mount gained ground. They were not far from the winning-post and still Rocket was a couple of lengths in the rear.

Will did his best, but the pain was terrible. Riding hard he gave Rocket his head; it was no longer any use trying to keep him in hand. He had no strength left. Feeling his head loose, Rocket swerved, but soon righted himself and, putting on a spurt on his own account, reached Medway's girth.

A tremendous struggle ensued, in which, Will said afterwards, he took no part; he merely sat on his horse in a half-dazed condition. Rocket never

The Trainer's Treasure

flinched; he took command, finding his rider helpless, and battled the race out gallantly. Medway had the assistance of a powerful, clever rider, who knew how to get every ounce out of his mount. Horse and jockey understood each other; the combination seemed likely to prove irresistible.

Rocket's slack rein showed plainly Will was helpless; it was fortunate he kept his seat, he hardly knew how he stuck on.

A tremendous roar proclaimed Rocket was on terms with Medway; that he had his head in front, and would probably win.

Medway's jockey rode a splendid finish, but luck favoured Rocket, who got up in the last stride, after being headed by Medway, and won. On all sides it was reckoned a marvellous win, because Rocket had no assistance from his rider, who sat on him like a dead-weight.

As Rocket turned round to go in, Will fell forward on his neck, his hands stretched out on either side. A policeman ran up and let the horse in, the crowd pressing round to see what happened. Nellie turned pale as she saw Will fall forward, and gave a slight cry of alarm. They all went down to render assistance. Rocket stood waiting for his rider to dismount, but Will was still only half-conscious. Permission was given to assist him to the scales when he recovered.

It was some ten minutes before he weighed in, and then he was almost carried into the room and placed on the seat. It was an anxious moment

Rocket with Will up

until "All right" was called, and Will said in a low voice:

"Did I win?"

"Yes, you stuck on splendidly," said Fred.

"I feel faint again," he said, and collapsed in Sir Leigh's arms.

An hour later they left the course, Will being taken to the hotel and put to bed. The doctor called in, and said he would be sufficiently recovered to be moved next day; his arm had been wrenched but not fractured again. He could understand the pain he must have been in during the race.

"Telegram for you, Sir Leigh," said Fred, handing it to him as he stood at Will's bedside.

"From Bourne," he said as he opened it, then exclaimed: "Good Heavens! what does this mean?"

"Anything the matter?" asked Fred anxiously.

"Read it," said Sir Leigh, handing it to him.

Fred read:

"Bidgood arrested on suspicion of murdering Cresfield.—PORTS."

"I don't believe he did it," said Sir Leigh.

"He's a bad lot," said Fred.

"But I do not think he would kill a man; I wonder what he was doing at Brook Farm?"

"Who?"

"Bidgood. If he had a hand in Cresfield's death they must both have been there."

The Trainer's Treasure

The news was communicated to the others.

Cissy was much distressed. Ralph had come to her assistance in the plantation—had he quarrelled with Cresfield afterwards and followed him to Brook Farm? Could she help Ralph in any way? If so, she must; it would only be right. She must try and see him and learn what took place after she went away. He could tell her, she thought, and she could obtain his permission to give his statement to Sir Leigh. In any case she would not believe in his guilt.

Will Bligh was not so convinced of Bidgood's innocence as the others. He had a shrewd suspicion Ralph was paid, or persuaded, by Cresfield, to fire his gun when it caused Rocket to bolt. Probably they had quarrelled and Ralph had attacked him; even so, it did not explain how they came to be at Brook Farm that night, or early in the morning.

The inquest had been postponed until Wednesday at Sir Leigh's request; probably some solution of the mystery would come out in the evidence.

Sir Leigh determined to return home at once. Will asked Cissy to go back with Mrs Floyd to look after things at the farm.

"You had better go too," said Fred to Nellie; "I will see to Will and bring him home."

"I prefer to remain with you," said Nellie, and Will, who heard her, thought: "It's worth while having a few hours' pain to gain her sympathy. I believe she cares for me a little bit."

Rocket with Will up

Sir Leigh, Cissy, and Mrs Floyd travelled together. When he entered the Hall his housekeeper said:

"Mrs Tapper is waiting to see you, sir; she is in great trouble about Ralph Bidgood."

"Show her into my room," said Sir Leigh, as he took off his overcoat.

CHAPTER XXVII

RALPH TELLS SIR LEIGH

MRS TAPPER was very much upset at Ralph's arrest on such a serious charge. She wondered where he had hidden the notes; had it not been for them, she would have believed in his innocence—even now she doubted his guilt. But how came he by the notes? She remembered he was a long time in the old cowshed before he went out on the night he was locked up. She searched there but found nothing. At the second attempt, however, she was more successful, and discovered one note hidden in a slit in one of the supports of the shed; the others he had probably secreted in different places.

She had this note in her possession when she went to Bourne Hall to wait for Sir Leigh.

"This is a bad business, Mrs Tapper," he said as he entered the room.

"It is, Sir Leigh, but I do not believe he is guilty."

"No more do I."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, sir, very glad. You will do all you can for him, I am sure."

Ralph tells Sir Leigh

Something in her manner caused him to wonder why she was so certain of his assistance.

"I shall see he has fair play," he said.

"You must get him off, Sir Leigh, and at the inquest if you can; he must not be sent for trial," she said solemnly.

"That rests with the jury," he said.

"And with you. You can do a great deal for him."

"Mrs Tapper, there is something behind all this," he said. "What is it?"

"I never intended telling you, but I must now."

"Go on, please."

"Ralph Bidgood is Sir William's son and his mother was my sister. She died soon after he was born and I took charge of the child. I have treated him as my own; most people think he is my son, they are welcome to think it. Whatever he may be, Sir Leigh, he is your half-brother; the same blood runs in your veins, the blood of the Herberts—you must save him," she said.

He did not doubt her. He thought this all along; there was something in Bidgood's face reminded him of Sir William.

"You believe me?" she asked.

"Yes. You have acted well by him; you have shielded your sister's name at the expense of your own."

"She is dead," said Liza, as though that was an ample reason for her conduct.

"I will do what I can for him," said Sir Leigh

The Trainer's Treasure

"The only evidence against him, I am told, is the half-witted boy, Jamie Sands."

"They cannot hang a man on such evidence," she said.

"But they will probably send him for trial if the coroner's jury do not acquit him."

"I must tell you something," she said. "You ought to know."

"What is it?"

She handed him the note for a hundred pounds.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, surprised.

She told him how she had found five one hundred pound notes in Ralph's coat pocket; how he had hidden them, and where she found this one.

"I wonder how he came by them?" said Sir Leigh.

"They frighten me," she said. "They can't have been honestly come by."

"Cresfield is not likely to have had such a sum on him," said Sir Leigh.

"Supposing he had and Ralph took it?" she said.

"Then the evidence against him would be damning."

"Sir Leigh?"

"Yes."

"Ask him."

"Who?"

"Ralph."

"See him at Potts' cottage?"

Ralph tells Sir Leigh

"Yes."

"Ought I to do this?" he said, half to himself.

"It will be right; it may save him. You must, Sir Leigh; it is your duty," she said.

"Perhaps it is. Sir William is responsible for his being in the world; I am the head of the family. Yes, I think you are right; I will see him," he said.

"God bless you, sir."

He looked at her, surprised at her fervour.

"You have a strong affection for him, although he is a bad lot?" he said.

"He's not really bad; he's so easily led, and it's not altogether his fault. Sir William did him a great wrong as well as his mother," she said. "I love Ralph with all his faults; he's never been unkind to me."

"He has been a lazy fellow all his life," said Sir Leigh. "He might have done far more for you."

"I am satisfied; will you do your part?"

"Yes, I will go at once," he said. "May I take the note with me?"

"Yes, and give him my love, Sir Leigh," she said, as she left him.

"Strange how women of her class stick to such scamps as Ralph Bidgood," he thought.

He went across to Potts' cottage; the constable opened the door. Sir Leigh was chairman of the bench in his district; he had a great respect for him.

The Trainer's Treasure

"Potts, I want you to let me have a private talk with Bidgood; the inquest is on Wednesday and I feel interested in his case."

"It's against the rules, Sir Leigh," said Potts.

"I know, but I will take the blame, if any."

"Very well, sir, I'll see him," said Potts.

Ralph Bidgood did not realise the position he was in. He knew he was innocent of killing Rufus Cresfield; he failed to see how strong the evidence was against him. As for the notes, no one knew anything about them.

"Sir Leigh," he said in answer to Potts; "what does he want to see me for?"

"To help you, no doubt."

Ralph laughed.

"I shan't require help; I am innocent."

"Innocent folk require help when they are in a tight fix," said Potts.

"But I'm not in a fix," remonstrated Ralph.

"You'll see him?"

"Oh yes, it can do no harm."

"Then come into my room and I'll leave you together."

"I might bolt," said Ralph, smiling.

"You've no chance; I shall be on the watch," said Potts, as Ralph followed him.

"Here he is, Sir Leigh; I will leave him with you," said the constable, as he showed Ralph into the room.

"Bidgood, you have got into a pretty mess," said Sir Leigh.

Ralph tells Sir Leigh

"It's all a mistake. I never touched Cresfield."

"All the same there is, I fancy, a strong case against you. I want to help you, and if I am to do so you must tell me everything."

"Why do you wish to help me?"

"Because Mrs Tapper has asked me to do so."

"She's seen you?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"Never mind that. Will you tell me what happened at Brook Farm?"

"You mean well by me?" asked Ralph.

"Yes."

"You do not believe I killed Cresfield?"

"No, I do not."

"Very good, then I'll tell you."

He gave Sir Leigh a full account of what happened in the plantation, omitting, however, that at first he assisted Cresfield when he caught hold of Cissy Bligh.

"Cresfield was a scoundrel," said Sir Leigh indignantly, wondering why Cissy had said nothing about it.

"I saw Cresfield come out of the barn; Mr Floyd followed. He had his horse; he rode away and Cresfield went towards Brook Farm. I felt dizzy and sat down, and fell asleep. When I came to, I followed him to see what he was up to. I saw him standing looking at the house; he suddenly threw up his arms and fell on his face. When I turned him over he was dead."

The Trainer's Treasure

"With Mr Floyd? that is strange," said Sir Leigh.

"I thought so too."

"You are sure you have told me everything?"

Ralph hesitated for a few moments, then said:

"Yes, everything."

"What about this and the four others?" asked Sir Leigh, holding up the one hundred pound note.

Ralph gasped. Where had he got it from?

"Who gave it you?" said Sir Leigh. "Where did you get five one hundred pound notes from? You must tell me if I am to help you."

"Mother, she gave it you?" said Ralph.

"Mrs Tapper handed it me," he said.

"Only one."

"There are four more. Where are they?" asked Sir Leigh.

"They're mine," said Ralph.

"Very well. Granted they are yours, where did you get them?" asked Sir Leigh.

Ralph refused to say, and Sir Leigh said:

"If you do not tell me, I shall leave you to your fate, and I may as well inform you that, although I believe you are innocent of Cresfield's death, you stand a very good chance of being hanged."

"You think that!" exclaimed Ralph, for the first time beginning to feel uneasy.

"I am sure of it. You are in a very tight place; I wish to get you out of it."

Ralph tells Sir Leigh

"Why do you take such an interest in me all of a sudden?"

"Because Mrs Tapper asked me to help you; because I believe you are innocent; and also because I believe if you get off, this will be a lesson to you for life, and that you will turn out a decent fellow after all," said Sir Leigh.

Ralph was influenced by his words; at the same time he was anxious to retain the five hundred pounds.

"The notes are mine," he said obstinately.

"Very well, they may be, but you must tell me where you got them," said Sir Leigh. "Come, make a clean breast of it; it will be better for you."

"I took them out of Cresfield's pocket," said Ralph sullenly.

"Cresfield had five hundred pounds on him! Where did he get it from?" said Sir Leigh, amazed.

"I don't know, without Quintin Floyd gave him the notes in the barn," said Ralph.

"Why should he give Cresfield so much money?"

"How do I know? I don't say he did, but it looks like it."

"I shall take this note to the bank; that may help me," said Sir Leigh.

"Then I'm done out of my money," said Ralph.

"If you tell the whole truth at the inquest," said Sir Leigh, "I will see you do not lose by it; it

The Trainer's Treasure

may be that nothing will be said about the notes, but if they are brought in you must speak out."

"In that case I shall be arrested for robbery," said Ralph.

"That is better than being sent for trial on a charge of murder," said Sir Leigh.

"They'll think I murdered him to take the notes?"

"You could not possibly have known he had them in his possession," said Sir Leigh.

"That's true," said Ralph. "I did not."

Ralph gave him instructions as to where he could find the remaining notes. Sir Leigh took possession of them and called at the local bank. It was after hours, but the manager saw him.

Sir Leigh produced the notes, asking if they were paid out at the bank, and to whom?

The manager said without hesitation:

"I handed them to Mr Floyd. I remember saying it was fortunate I had notes of that value in the bank."

Sir Leigh thanked him, and went home. Early next morning, he rode to Heathrow to see Quintin Floyd.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A DRAMATIC INCIDENT

QUINTIN FLOYD heard of Bidgood's arrest, but took very little notice of it. He wondered what had become of the notes he gave Cresfield. He never anticipated his death in this extraordinary manner. Had Bidgood or anyone else robbed the dead man of the notes? If so, there might be trouble.

He was glad Daisy was away when he heard of Bidgood's arrest; it gave him time to think. He determined to remain inactive, and when she arrived he was almost himself.

"Sir Leigh Herbert wishes to see you, sir," said the servant, just as Floyd was finishing his breakfast.

"Wonder what he wants," he said.

"Something to do with Ralph Bidgood, perhaps," said Daisy.

"I know nothing about his affairs," he said as he left the room.

"I am afraid you do," thought Daisy.

"I will not detain you long," said Sir Leigh.

"I believe these notes are your property? I wish to return them to you."

The Trainer's Treasure

Quintin Floyd made no answer; he was too dumbfounded to speak.

"Are they your property?" asked Sir Leigh, handing them to him.

He took the notes mechanically, examined them, and was about to deny they were his, when Sir Leigh said:

"I took them to the bank; the manager said he paid them to you."

After this it was useless to deny the fact, and he knew he was in a very strange position.

Sir Leigh saw how surprised and disturbed he was; he hoped to get some inkling as to the cause.

"Why did you give Cresfield five hundred pounds?" asked Sir Leigh, taking it for granted such was the case.

Quintin Floyd did not reply; he merely stared at the wall beyond Sir Leigh.

"I have a right to know, as Cresfield was in my employ," he said. "You were seen in the barn with him; he must have had the notes from you."

Quintin Floyd regained some of his self-possession . . .

"How did you get hold of them?" he asked.

"They were taken from Cresfield's pocket."

"By whom?"

"By someone who saw him fall dead."

"Fall dead. He was strangled," said Floyd.

"He was not."

"How do you know?"

A Dramatic Incident

" Ralph Bidgood saw him fall down; when he went to him he was dead."

" I see; and Bidgood robbed him of these? "

" He wishes to restore them to you," said Sir Leigh.

" And get out of his trouble that way? "

" He did not kill Cresfield."

" You take his word for it? "

" I do."

" He is not to be relied upon."

" In this case he is; he has told me everything."

" What? " asked Floyd.

" He saw you and Cresfield in the barn. He followed Cresfield to Brook Farm. I am perfectly certain that Cresfield set the house on fire, but I do not know why; I am here to ask you why he did it? "

" Me! " exclaimed Floyd angrily.

" Yes. I believe you gave him the notes as a bribe to fire the place. Why did you do it? "

" I did not."

" But you gave him the notes."

" Supposing I did? "

" Why did you give him them? "

" I will not be cross-questioned," said Quintin.

" You will have to appear at the inquest," said Sir Leigh.

He started; this would be awkward.

" I know nothing about the affair," he said.

" You gave Cresfield the notes; that will be given against you."

The Trainer's Treasure

"By whom?"

"By me," said Sir Leigh.

"But nothing can be proved," said Quintin.

"I deny everything."

"Very well, as you please, but you must appear at the inquest," said Sir Leigh.

"I shall not."

"Then a warrant will be issued against you."

"I will risk it," said Quintin.

"Why not explain to me how you came to give Cresfield the notes?" asked Sir Leigh.

"Because I do not feel disposed," he said.

"I think Bidgood killed Cresfield, and robbed him."

"You will say that at the inquest?" said Sir Leigh. "He has sent you the notes."

"At your instigation," said Floyd. "You are a magistrate, chairman of the bench, and you are compounding a felony."

"I am not; I am trying to save an innocent man from a very serious charge," said Sir Leigh.

"All the same you are acting illegally; you would be struck off the magisterial roll if it became known."

"I am not afraid; I am doing nothing I am ashamed of. You are at the bottom of the whole of this black business," said Sir Leigh.

"You had better take care what you say," said Floyd, biting his lip.

"You paid Cresfield five hundred pounds to set Brook Farm House on fire; you are morally,

A Dramatic Incident

responsible for the death of three men. I am certain of it," said Sir Leigh.

"It's a lie, an infernal lie. I'll ram it down your throat," he said threateningly.

Sir Leigh smiled at him and did not move.

"You know my opinion," he said. "It is only an opinion; I cannot prove it."

"You will state this to the police?" said Quintin.

"No."

Floyd was immensely relieved, but he knew he was in peril. Ralph Bidgood might give the police a hint.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked Floyd.

"No, but I think you ought to leave Heathrow as soon as you conveniently can."

"I'm not good enough for the county," sneered Floyd.

"In my opinion you are not; I will return the subscription you sent to the Harriers' fund. You will keep the notes?" said Sir Leigh.

"I may as well," said Floyd, as he put them in in his pocket. "Do you really mean to tell me you think Bidgood is innocent?"

"I am sure of it, and I am equally certain that something will happen at the inquest to prove it. I have an idea I mean to carry out—with the coroner's permission," said Sir Leigh.

Daisy saw him go and did not wish to speak to him. She was fearful as to why he had come; it

The Trainer's Treasure

must have been about the fire—the inquest—Bidgood. Why did not Quinton trust her? She shuddered at a dreadful thought that occurred to her. She dare not utter it aloud, even to herself.

The inquest was held on the charred remains of Sandy Freem and Ash Burgiss and the body of Rufus Cresfield, at the "Green Dragon," Newton.

Sir Leigh saw the coroner before the proceedings commenced and made a suggestion to him.

"I agree with you," said the coroner; "you shall question the lad in the way you desire."

The inquiry dragged on slowly; there was no doubt as to the cause of death of the two men in the house, although it was a mystery as to how the place came to be set alight. Cresfield's death was a very different matter; it was shrouded in suspicion and mystery.

Ralph Bidgood was severely questioned by the coroner, when he related what he saw, and how Cresfield fell to the ground dead.

The boy, Jamie Sands, was frightened when brought into court, but the kindness shown reassured him. He explained how he saw Ralph Bidgood bending over Cresfield's body.

Suddenly Sir Leigh stood before the half-witted lad. He raised his arms above his head, struggled as though he was choking, then fell forward on the table; it was exactly how Ralph had explained to him Cresfield fell.

The lad stared at Sir Leigh, then with a shriek of fear, called out:

A Dramatic Incident

"He did it like that. Poor Sir Leigh! He's dead. He's dead. He fell like that. He went on to his face. Ralph came up and pulled him over."

"Who fell like Sir Leigh?" asked the coroner.

"Cresfield. He fell down like that," said Jamie.

"And Ralph Bidgood?"

"He rushed up to him and pulled him over."

Sir Leigh rose from the table; his ruse had succeeded. Jamie at once remembered Rufus Cresfield's fall.

The lad looked in amazement at Sir Leigh.

"You're not dead like Cresfield?" he said in a low voice.

"No, I'm not dead, Jamie," said Sir Leigh, smiling.

"I'm so glad, sir, so very glad. Poor Cresfield!" Then an idea entered his half-witted head. "What's Ralph doing there? I like Ralph; he's good to me when he finds me in the woods. He knows I do no harm."

"Some people say Ralph killed Cresfield," said the inspector.

"No, no, no," shouted Jamie. "He did not; Cresfield fell like Sir Leigh, then Ralph rushed up to him. I saw his face; it was horrible," said Jamie, shivering.

"When did you see Cresfield's face?" asked the coroner.

"When Ralph had gone," said Jamie.

"I think a post-mortem had better be made on

The Trainer's Treasure

Cresfield's body," said the coroner; this was decided upon and the inquest adjourned.

Next day the doctor reported that Cresfield's death was due to sudden shock, acting on a weak heart and impaired constitution, and that the appearance of his face and throat were undoubtedly due to these causes. He found no marks of violence or finger-prints on the throat; there was no forcible strangulation. This settled the matter, as far as Ralph Bidgood was concerned, and he was discharged. The origin of the fire was somewhat of a mystery, but the general conclusion was that one of the occupants set the building alight by accident; that Cresfield saw the flames, and hurried to Brook Farm; that he over-exerted himself and brought on the attack that ended his life. As for Ralph Bidgood he stated he went after Cresfield when he woke up and remembered seeing him pass along the back of White House Farm. No mention was made of the notes, and Sir Leigh was justified by his conscience in the course he had taken.

When Sir Leigh's dramatic incident at the inquest was fully reported, many people asked why he did so much for Ralph Bidgood?

The villagers of Bourne had their ideas on the subject, so had Mrs Tapper, but they kept them close.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DEATH RIDE

It was a fortnight after the inquest and Ralph Bidgood's acquittal. During this time Quintin Floyd's behaviour had been peculiar. His wife began to be afraid of him, he acted in such a strange way. Instead of going about as usual he sat muttering in various parts of the house. He was incapable of remaining in his room. Daisy found him roaming about the house; sometimes he passed without seeing her. It was useless questioning him; his answers were incoherent.

She went to Meadow Water and consulted Fred Shirley. He advised her to call a doctor in. Nellie was sorry for Mrs Floyd; she did not seem at all herself—the look in her eyes almost frightened the girl.

Nellie mentioned the matter to Will. Cissy had at last told him about Cresfield's attack upon her and how Ralph released her.

"He is dead and can do no more harm," said Will. "He was a dangerous man."

"You do not think Ralph killed him?" she asked.

The Trainer's Treasure

"No, not after hearing the evidence at the inquest," said Will.

He had never liked Quintin Floyd. When Nellie explained what Mrs Floyd had said, he wondered what was the cause of his strange behaviour. He had not Sir Leigh's knowledge to guide him. The owner of Bourne Hall had a good idea of what caused Floyd's troubled state of mind.

Betty Herbert had taken her brother roundly to task for helping Ralph Bidgood. She had no faith in him. She believed him responsible for Cresfield's death.

"You are too lenient with such fellows," she said. "They do not deserve it."

"Bidgood do. I had a duty to perform in his case," he said.

"A duty? What duty?" she asked in surprise.

He did not enlighten her, and she was so angry at his silence that she left the Hall and returned to London. He was not sorry.

It had been a wild day; snow and sleet fell heavily, the wind howled and whistled, then hovered round Heathrow with a low moaning sound "like spirits in torment," so thought Daisy Floyd.

At night it began to freeze. The roads became as slippery as glass; icicles hung from the eaves and suspended like sharp needles from the trees. Even on the grass, the going was treacherous.

Daisy retired. She lay awake for some time,

The Death Ride

waiting to hear if Quintin went to his room. Gradually she dozed off. How long she had been asleep she did not know, nor what had roused her. She sat up listening. The wind moaned; she shivered. The moonlight streamed in between the blind and the window-sash. She crept out of bed and looked out. Snow was falling in large flakes; a white mantle covered the ground. It was so bright she could distinctly see Garth Hill, the white house, the river at the foot, the white road, the hill on the other side.

She heard the sound of horses' hoofs; they seemed to come from the stable-yard. Who could it be?

She had not long to wait. She was so startled, she did not cry out, her eyes were fixed in horror on a horseman riding towards the gate.

It was Quintin. He was hatless, in his shirt-sleeves, the snow whirling round him. He was mounted on Gauntlet, the fastest, wildest horse in the stables, who plunged and reared, snorted, seemed frightened at his rider.

She opened the window. The snow hit her in the face with sharp little pricks. He heard the noise and looked up. She never forgot his face. His eyes burned like live coals, his hair was disordered; a terrible smile greeted her as he gazed.

"Quintin, where are you going?" she called out.

"To hell," he said in a sort of shriek. "The

The Trainer's Treasure

fire burns me; I can feel the flames scorching my body. They're after me, three of them, but I'll beat them. They'll never catch me on Gauntlet, never."

"Stop, stop, Quintin," she called, "I have something to tell you."

His answer was a mocking yell. He plunged the spurs into Gauntlet; the horse dashed out of the gate at a mad gallop.

For a moment Daisy watched him, horrified, then fell fainting on the floor. The window was open; the snow pelted in, falling on her body.

Quintin Floyd was pursued by phantoms. Behind him perched Sandy Fream, alongside rode Cresfield, on his left another figure. He struck out wildly, urging the maddened horse on.

Gauntlet slipped on the frozen grass but retained his feet in a marvellous way. The madman on his back, for he was little else, shouted in his frenzy.

"Burn, burn, burn," he yelled. "You're both dead; all three of you dead. I'm safe, I tell you; you cannot catch me."

Gauntlet was racing down Garth Hill at dangerous speed, the infuriated horse almost as mad as his rider; his sides streaked with blood where the cruel spurs scored him. Foam flew from his mouth; his nostrils flamed red in the frosty air. They were utterly alone on this wild hill-side,

The Death Ride

snow falling around them, the moon bathing them in silvery light.

Quintin Floyd yelled again and again. His cries echoed across the hills but no one heard.

Madly Gauntlet plunged on. Once he pitched on to his knees; Quintin tugged him up, dug the spurs in again, poured out a volley of ribald language. He knew not, neither did he care, whither they were going, but rode wildly on. His body burned like fire, his head throbbed, his eyes were blood-shot; awful fancies pierced his brain. Every act of his life seemed to pass before him; he saw what his first evil step had led to. His mind underwent a change; he was in the bush in Australia, riding in and out among the trees. He heard a crash; his mate lay bleeding on the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Quintin, "not Floyd, Fairthorne. I'm Quintin Floyd, curse you, I'm Quintin Floyd. He's dead. They're all dead."

Again he urged Gauntlet forward. The hill was steeper here, falling almost sheer down to the half-frozen river. He saw it not, nor would he have heeded had he done so.

Gauntlet was wellnigh spent. He breathed hard; the exertion to retain his footing was tremendous.

There must be an end to this.

Down, down, down they went, man and horse. Gauntlet fell, pitched forward, his rider under him. They rolled together, crashing into the thin ice on the river. There was a splash, a struggle, then

The Trainer's Treasure

all was still. The water went slowly on; the ice clung round the man and the horse.

In the morning the horrified maid found Mrs Floyd on her bedroom floor, near the open window, almost covered in snow. She shouted for help. They put her in bed; she lay like one dead, cold as marble. The groom found the stable door open and Gauntlet gone. ,

There was no sign of Quintin Floyd.

The distracted man was sent post-haste to Bourne for the doctor, who came at once, as fast as his horse could carry him on the treacherous ground. An hour after he arrived at Heathrow a boy was born, the mother being on the verge of death.

The groom, distanced by the doctor, met Will Bligh, to whom he told his story.

"I am afraid something has happened to Mr Floyd," he said. "He's been very queer of late."

"Did he go out on Gauntlet?" asked Will.

"I should say so, in the dead of night. She must have heard him, looked out of the window, and the shock wellnigh killed her. They found her covered in snow which had blown in at the window."

"We will search for him," said Will.

They led their horses down Garth Hill; it was too dangerous to ride.

Will's keen eyes saw something in the river where the water swirled and eddied round an obstruction.

The Death Ride

"I wonder what that is," he said, pointing to it. The groom shuddered.

"Hold the horses; I'll slide down and see," said Will.

With difficulty he went down the slope, sliding most of the way.

In the river he saw a horse and the body of a man. The ice almost covered them with a thin coating.

An hour later, men pulled Quintin Floyd and Gauntlet out of the Garth. He was taken to Heathrow in a float. The news quickly spread; Sir Leigh heard it and rode to Heathrow.

In answer to his inquiries he learned the facts. He was much concerned about Mrs Floyd's condition. When he saw Quintin Floyd's body, he thought: "His thoughts drove him mad; it is perhaps as well it is ended: better for her, better for him."

Fred Shirley and Nellie were much upset. She at once went to see if she could be of any assistance to Mrs Floyd.

The doctor sent a man post-haste to Bourne to telegraph for a nurse.

Cissy Bligh came and offered her services.

"You can both help," he said; "there will be plenty to do. The child is healthy; the mother is in grave danger."

"The child!" exclaimed Cissy.

Nellie explained.

"I mean to look after the little mite," she said.

The Trainer's Treasure

**When Will Bligh came into the room downstairs,
he saw Nellie nursing the baby.**

A beautiful light shone in her eyes.

**" Kiss it, Will," she said, as she held it up
to him.**

CHAPTER XXX

THE TREASURE WON

DAISY FLOYD recovered; the doctor advised her to take a long sea voyage, and leave her boy behind. This she would not do. She was possessed with one idea: she would go to Sydney and find out about the man named Fairthorne, and she would take her boy with her.

After an absence of nine months she returned fully restored to health, much easier in mind, although still doubting. In Sydney she visited the hospital. From the nurse in charge of the patient, and the house-surgeon, she learned all they had to tell about Robert Fairthorne, who died a month before her arrival.

"He laboured under a strange delusion to the last," said the nurse. "He fancied he was Quintin Floyd, the gentleman who sent him here, your husband."

"You have no doubt he was Richard Fairthorne?" she asked.

"None whatever. Patients who have had severe injuries to the head often imagine strange things. He was, I believe, a partner of Mr Floyd's

The Trainer's Treasure

in the West somewhere. A man named Sandy Fream wrote once or twice from England; I read the letters to him."

"May I ask what he wrote about?"

"They were peculiar letters; Fream seemed to be trying to do something for him, but I never found out what it was."

"No mention was made of my husband?"

"None; there was something about the man who had wronged him, but it was very vague."

When Daisy Floyd returned to England, she went to Heathrow. She arranged with Sir Leigh to rent it permanently. She wondered if her husband were really Quintin Floyd or Robert Fairthorne. She fancied he ought to have borne the latter name; for the sake of her boy she kept her thoughts secret.

Will Bligh had not yet screwed up his courage to ask Nellie to be his wife, but when Sir Leigh proposed to Cissy, and was accepted, he vowed he would not be behind him in such matters.

It was Amos Berry who brought things to a head. He met Will as he tramped over Garth Hill with his letter bag, and after the usual salutations about the weather, the old talk about the crops, and so on, he said:

"And when are you going to get married? You'll want a housekeeper now your sister is leaving you."

The Treasure Won

"I haven't found the lady yet," said Will, smiling.

"She bain't far off," said Amos.

"Indeed, where is she?"

"At Meadow Water; the trainer's treasure they call her. What about her? She's the loveliest girl in the country."

"So she is," said Will, "far too lovely for me to win her."

"You're wrong; she worships you," said Amos.

"Nonsense," said Will.

"'Tain't; I knows for certain. Why, when you were bad after that accident she almost cried her pretty eyes out, so she did. I says to her, 'What's yer a cryin' for, Missey?' and she said, 'Oh, Amos, do you think he'll get well again soon?' and I says, 'Of course he will,' and she says, 'Bless you for that, Amos,' and I says, 'I don't mind if I do, Missey,' and she sent me round to see Mrs Dent," said Amos.

"This is all true?" asked Will.

"Gospel, s'help me," said Amos.

"That's done it," chuckled Amos, as he walked down the hill; "I always intended bringing 'em together."

Sure enough he had a hand in it, for Will went to Meadow Water the same night. As he passed the gravel pit, he looked down and thought of what happened there. It all came back to him in some mysterious way. He remembered how Nellie kissed him, and murmured words of love; it was

The Trainer's Treasure

true, he almost heard her—how could he have forgotten them for such a long time? This gave him courage and he hurried on.

Nellie heard the catch of the gate click, looked up, and saw Will; he often came to the house, but she knew why he was here now, and her thoughts made her heart beat faster.

"It's Will, Dad," she said.

"Oh!" exclaimed Fred, and went quietly out of the room. He too fancied there was something in the wind.

"Nellie, I've come to ask you to be my wife," said Will, standing still before her, looking into her face. "Will you have me? am I good enough for you? I'm only a plain man."

"Yes, I will have you, Will," she said, smiling; then as he took her to him she added, "Why didn't you ask me before, silly Billy?"

"I daren't risk my happiness," he said.

After a time, occupied in lovers ways, she said:

"Do you know what happened in the gravel pit?"

"Of course I do," he said with a smile.

"Everything?"

"I suppose I was insensible some of the time."

"You were, and oh, Will, what do you think I did?"

"I don't know."

"I kissed you, and said I loved you dearly. I have often wondered if you knew; did you?" she asked.

The Treasure Won

He shook his head.

"I believe you did."

"I had an idea I'd been in Heaven when I came round. It must have been that," said Will.

"Don't tease; be serious," she said. "Did you hear me?"

"I had a hazy idea you took me in your arms and said nice things to me."

"I am sure you heard, Will. How could you keep it to yourself all this time?"

He explained how everything was recalled to mind when he looked down into the gravel pit as he came to see her.

Fred Shirley was delighted. He knew Will's sterling worth, felt he would make his treasure happy, and White House Farm adjoined Meadow Water.

"Will's not one of the showy kind," he said, "but he's a grand fellow. I like him better than any man I know."

"So you are pleased, Dad?" she said.

"Very pleased. I know my treasure has found a safe place for life. She will be well taken care of," he said, as he kissed her.

Betty Herbert was highly indignant at her brother's engagement to Cissy Bligh. She stormed and scolded, but all to no purpose. At last he lost his temper, when she made disparaging remarks about Cissy's ancestry. He told her the truth about Ralph Bidgood, and that unpleasant fact toned her down considerably.

The Trainer's Treasure

Ralph had been fairly dealt with by Sir Leigh, much better than he had any right to expect. He was installed on a small farm, and furnished with sufficient capital to run it properly. He tried to persuade Mrs Tapper to join him, but she declined to leave her cottage and bit of land.

"You get married and settle down, Ralph; that's the best thing can happen to you. Sir Leigh has been very kind."

"All right, Mother, I'll look out for a nice girl," he said, "and we'll make you welcome any time you call to see us."

"Mother," she thought. "I've been as good as one to you. Hope you'll go straight now."

Will Bligh and Nellie Shirley were married in Bourne church. It was a picturesque wedding. They were universal favourites.

The members of the Valley Harriers Hunt gave her a handsome present. The idea originated with Sir Leigh, who made the presentation.

It was an oil painting, by a well-known artist, of Nellie on her favourite hunter, surrounded by the harriers, in the deep cutting on the railway line, with the train approaching in the distance.

"To Nellie Shirley, who saved the Valley Harriers; this painting is presented by the members of the Hunt, as a token of sincere admiration for her courageous act."

This was the inscription, and Sir Leigh made a capital speech, in which he extolled her so much

The Treasure Won

that she became quite nervous and could only reply:

"Thank you, thank you all; it is too good of you."

A short speech, but quite sufficient, as it came straight from her heart.

They went to Paris for the honeymoon, and Will Bligh had Rocket sent over for the big steeplechase at Auteuil.

He did not ride him, as Nellie asked him not to do so, but Sir Leigh came over specially for the mount, and how he won, after a terrific battle with the French champion, Nauban, is a matter of turf history. It was a rich prize, and to Will Bligh, having none too much capital, it came in useful.

He was offered a large sum for Rocket, which he declined, and he never parted with his only "chaser" which did him such good service in many a hard-fought race.

It was on the advice of Max Brandon and Fred Shirley that Rocket was trained by the former for the Metropolitan Stakes at Epsom Spring Meeting, which he won, carrying a light impost.

When Sir Leigh and Cissy Bligh were married, there were general rejoicings in Bourne, and even Lady Betty condescended to be agreeable on the auspicious occasion.

Mrs Floyd lived quietly at Heathrow with her boy. She sometimes wondered whether she had any right to the name she bore, but for her child's

The Trainer's Treasure

Santipur Public Library.

DATE SLIP.

--	--	--

১। এই স্লিপ ছিঁড়িলে বা নষ্ট করিলে এক আনা ফাইন দিতে হইবে।

২। পুস্তকখানি ^১সপ্তাহের মধ্যে ফেরত দিতে হইবে।
২ সপ্তাহের

JOHN LOMBARD'S NOVELS SHILLING NOVEL SERIES

COMPLETE LIST FOR 1912

The Life Sentence*	VICTORIA CROSS
A Complex Love Affair	JAMES BLYTH
Improper Prue	ANONYMOUS
The Woman in the Firelight	OLIVER SANDYS
Mighty Mayfair*	CORONET
Theo	By a PEER
Decree Nisi	LADY X
Sport and the Woman	C. RAE-BROWN
A Perfect Passion	MRS STANLEY WRENCH
Wilhelmina in London	BARRY PAIN
The Wife of Colonel Hughes	HUBERT WALES
The Old Allegiance	HUBERT WALES
Cynthia in the Wilderness	HUBERT WALES
Mr. and Mrs Villiers	HUBERT WALES
Hilary Thoraton	HUBERT WALES
Five Nights	VICTORIA CROSS
Anna Lombard	VICTORIA CROSS
The Penalty	JAMES BLYTH
Amazement	JAMES BLYTH
Rubina	JAMES BLYTH
Thora's Conversion	JAMES BLYTH
The Member for Easterby	JAMES BLYTH
The Hard Way	By a PEER
To Justify the Means	By a PEER
The Diary of My Honeymoon	LADY X
Love's Fool	MRS STANLEY WRENCH
Burnt Wings	MRS STANLEY WRENCH
Kissing Cup the Second*	C. RAE-BROWN
The Great Newmarket Mystery*	C. RAE-BROWN
A Jilt's Journal	RITA
For Faith and Navarre	MAY WYNN
Keepers of the House	COSMO HAMILTON
Confessions of a Princess	ANONYMOUS
The Great Gay Road (Novel of the Play)	TOM GALLON
His Master Purpose	HAROLD BINDLOSS
The Mask	WILLIAM LE QUEUX
The Progress of Pauline Kessler	By the Author of "The Adventures of 'John Johns'"
Ada Vernham, Actress	RICHARD MARSH
Sweet "Doll" of Haddon Hall	J. E. MUDDOCK
Confessions of Cleodora	CARLTON DAWK
Secret History of the Court of Berlin	H. W. FISCHER

* Nov. First Published

Lainier's T

JOHN LONG'S 6d. NET 10TH NOVELS

ATLANTIC.—"Certainly remarkable at the price."

WORLD.—"The nature of the Series is frankly popular. It should have a wide circulation."

BIRMINGHAM GAZETTE.—"For excellence of reading matter and the standing of the authors John Long's Sixpenny Net (Cloth) Novels are unsurpassed."

COMPLETE LIST FOR 1912

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 FATHER ANTHONY . . . | ROBERT BUCHANAN |
| 2 DELILAH OF THE SNOWS . . . | HAROLD BINDLOSS |
| 3 ONLY BETTY . . . | CURTIS YORKE |
| 4 THE GARDEN OF MYSTERY . . . | RICHARD MARSH |
| 5 IN SPITE OF THE CZAR . . . | GUY BOOTHBY |
| 6 THE VEILED MAN . . . | WILLIAM LE QUEUX |
| 7 THE SIN OF JASPER STANDISH . . . | RICA |
| 8 A BORDER SCOURGE . . . | BERRIAM MITFORD |
| 9 WAYWARD ANNE . . . | CURTIS YORKE |
| 10 THE GREATER POWER . . . | HAROLD BINDLOSS |
| 11 A CABINET SECRET . . . | GUY BOOTHBY |
| 12 THE EYE OF ISAR . . . | WILLIAM LE QUEUX |
| 13 A WOMAN PERFECTED . . . | RICHARD MARSH |
| 14 HYPOCRITES AND SINNERS . . . | VIOLET TWEEDALE |
| 15 THE SILENT HOUSE . . . | FERGUS HUME |
| 16 BY RIGHT OF PURCHASE . . . | HAROLD BINDLOSS |
| 17 THE OTHER SARA . . . | CURTIS YORKE |
| 18 LITTLE JOSEPHINE . . . | L. T. MEADE |
| 19 THE MAGNETIC GIRL . . . | RICHARD MARSH |
| 20 A BRIDE FROM THE SEA . . . | GUY BOOTHBY |
| 21 THE MATHESON MONEY . . . | FLORENCE WARDEN |
| 22 CRIMSON LILIES . . . | MAY CROMMELIN |
| 23 THE GRASS WIDOW . . . | DOROTHEA GERRARD |
| 24 THRICE ARMED . . . | HAROLD BINDLOSS |
| 25 THE GIRL IN GREY . . . | CURTIS YORKE |

As in due course other volumes by equally popular authors will be introduced.

London: JOHN LONG, Ltd., 19, 21, 23, 25, North Street, Haymarket

